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ABSTRACT

This document is comprised of the three 2002 issues of a newsletter of the Harvard Family Research Project, designed to share new ideas and experiences in evaluating systems reform and comprehensive child and family services. The Spring issue focuses on family support evaluations and their role in advancing the field of family support and includes articles on the following topics: (1) the need to expand the notion of family support to include using information for collective action; (2) an overview on effect size and what it reveals about family support program effectiveness; (3) suggestions for strengthening family support research and evaluation; (4) a national database of family support programs incorporating family supportive evaluation; (5) parents' role in using data to assess and change the performance of their children's schools; and (6) participatory action research to build community capacity. The Fall issue concerns continuous improvement in human service organizations and includes articles on: (1) building a workplace culture that values inquiry and critical self-review; (2) a learning approach to evaluation; (3) increasing program equity without compromising program efficiency; (4) results accountability systems; (5) developing an outcome-based information system; and (6) balancing program impact with continuous improvement. The Winter issue focuses on public communication campaigns and includes articles on the following topics: (1) behavioral change theory; (2) methods for campaign evaluation; (3) research and evaluation inside the Ad Council; (4) tips for judging the credibility of research; and (5) a ground strategy for spreading campaign messages. Each issue includes information on training opportunities, evaluation resources, and promising practices in program evaluation. (KB)

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The Evaluation Exchange: Emerging Strategies in Evaluating Child and Family Services, 2002.

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M. Elena Lopez, Editor

Harvard Family Research Project
Harvard Graduate School of Education

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the evaluation exchange

Harvard Family Research Project ▮ Harvard Graduate School of Education ▮ Emerging Strategies in Evaluating Child & Family Services ▮ Vol. VIII No. 1 ▮ Spring 2002

from the director's desk

Heather Weiss

Nearly twenty years ago I launched the Harvard Family Research Project to provide a knowledge base for the emerging family support field. I presented my early research at a 1983 conference at Yale University, a memorable event because it brought together pioneering researchers, program developers, and policymakers to lay out the trajectory of modern-day family support. The fact that family support is now part of mainstream programs for children and families indicates how far the field has come.

This issue of *The Evaluation Exchange* provides an opportunity to take stock of family support evaluations and their role in moving the field forward. As the family support field matures, evaluation addresses more complex issues about the range of program effects, and the circumstances in which programs work best. We present two thought provoking pieces. Using meta-analysis, McCartney and Dearing challenge us to change the ways we examine the evaluation evidence, and to consider the evidence contextually. Dunst urges getting beyond the question of "what works" toward a more detailed scrutiny of the relationship among family support principles, program practice, and family outcomes.

The evolution of family support will depend in large part on how families shape and assess the activities that promote their well-being. We have compiled several articles that illustrate a broader notion of family support to include families gaining access to information and using it to leverage change. Families use data to advocate for better-performing schools for their children, build family-strengthening environments at the neighborhood level, and educate policymakers. In doing so, they begin to level the playing field between professional and layperson, and lend a new dimension to the empowerment principle in family support.

Having families at the center of getting and using data stimulates new directions in data collection methods and dissemination practices. Patton reminds us that partnerships with families enrich the variety of evaluation options, and also challenge evaluators to examine the assumptions of traditional evaluation methods. This issue reflects many exciting examples of community-based practices—study circles, storytelling, videography, and neighborhood asset mapping—to document what matters most to families.

Family support evaluation is no longer only about understanding program effectiveness; it is also about building capacity for evaluation at all levels. With the increasing use of evaluation as a tool for learning and continuous improvement, evaluators are designing research-program partnerships that both add value to the research and transfer evaluative skills to local programs and individual parents. Several articles in this issue describe how partnerships add value to evaluation design, indicator development, and formative evaluation approaches. They illustrate that it is possible to involve families and programs without making tradeoffs that compromise the research design and the credibility of the results.

Considerable discussions are taking place about creative approaches to evaluating family support initiatives. The HFRP research team and I invite you to share your ideas by emailing us at hfrp@gse.harvard.edu.

Heather

Heather B. Weiss, Ed.D.
Founder & Director
Harvard Family Research Project

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Learning from Families

M. Elena Lopez, from Harvard Family Research Project, discusses expanding the role of family support to include supporting families' using information to improve their communities.

> "Families are empowered when they have access to information and resources and take action to improve the well-being of children, families, and communities."[1]

Over the last two decades, this fundamental family support premise has largely focused on *individual* family access to information and resources to attain *individual* goals. Less attention has been paid to the ways that families—as part of neighborhoods and communities—can *collectively* use information as a tool for creating *community-wide* family-strengthening activities. However, the growing momentum of "civic participation" in education, health, and welfare reform suggests the need to expand the notion of family support to include getting and using information for collective action. This signals changes in the way programs and professionals can support families, with strategies such as:

- Families working together toward collective rather than exclusively individual family-strengthening goals.
- Families building their capacity to get and use data, a service not traditionally offered by family support programs.
- Families deciding the means by which information about families is gathered, used, and disseminated—a task traditionally controlled by professionals.
- Families learning to connect information with opportunities for neighborhood-based action.

One attempt to invest in this broader notion of family support is Making Connections, a multi-city demonstration project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF). Lodged within a larger neighborhood transformation initiative, Making Connections is about engaging low-income families and communities in family-strengthening efforts. (For more information see www.aecf.org/initiatives/ntfd.)

A key component of Making Connections is to build capacity for generating information to support action. In each site "learning partners" perform roles such as coordinating study circles, conducting data-related training and technical assistance, and providing data analysis and synthesis. These partners vary across sites and include a mix of local foundations, research and policy centers, individual consultants, and advocacy organizations. Some partners that participated in AECF's National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership built on their existing data warehouses to provide neighborhood level socioeconomic and demographic information.

Early Lessons

The early lessons from the first phase of the project suggest new and different ways of supporting families.[2]

1. *Support and validate families' knowledge about family-strengthening goals.* Some Making Connections sites adapted a study circles model,[3] where small groups of residents gather weekly four to six times in a facilitated dialogue to explore specific concerns. Participants included community residents and, in some cases, service providers. The study circles focused on topics such as:

- Identifying family and neighborhood assets.
- Envisioning what strong families and desired neighborhoods look like.
- Voicing the needs of families and communities.
- Understanding the challenges to meet those needs.
- Applying data to meet residents' priorities for action.

[1] Family Resource Coalition. (1996). *Guidelines for Family Support Practice*. Chicago: Family Resource Coalition. Page 6.

[2] Information for this article was derived from interviews with learning partners in eight cities, site documentation, and Web resources.

[3] The sites used different terms for the study circles, such as "family circles" and "neighborhood circles." Information about study circles is available from the Study Circle Resource Center at www.studycircles.org.

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As residents shared observations about families and neighborhoods, and their theories of what long- and short-term actions can effect change, they demonstrated the value of local knowledge in problem-solving. For example, the Seattle study circles revealed the gaps between the solutions generated by immigrant families and the programs offered by service agencies. Families educated the service providers and funders about the importance of life skills and cultural preservation to strengthen the bonds between parents and children.

In addition, the study circles validated the co-production of local learning by the residents and study circle sponsors. Learning partners synthesized the information and organized cross-neighborhood gatherings to verify residents' issues and solutions.

2. *Build families' capacity to get and use data.* Making Connections supported site efforts to determine the information they needed to address local issues. Residents identified research topics and shaped data collection and use. As residents collected data, they not only learned new skills, but also gained the opportunity to bond with neighbors and engage in civic activities. For example:

- A grassroots organization in Indianapolis conducted neighborhood asset surveys. The surveys showed a wide range of skills in neighborhoods that are often portrayed as poorly educated. They also indicated that residents longed for more activities for children, beautification of the area, and safer neighborhoods, all of which would enhance family life. Following door-to-door dissemination of the results, some residents have joined the organization's action committees. (For more information see www.indyfund.org/partners/Initiatives.cfm.)
- Four Denver neighborhoods formed a Neighborhood Learning Partnership to develop information-based solutions to the problems facing their neighborhoods. The learning partnership identifies what, how, and to whom the information is released, as well as how it is used. When one of the identified needs was the "digital divide," the learning partnership commissioned an assessment of local technology needs as a first step to make technology and the Internet more available for families and residents in the neighborhoods. (See www.makingconnections denver.org.)

3. *Support families' decision about new forms of documentation, use, and dissemination of data.* Making Connections supported new and existing avenues for residents to explain the meaning of family strengthening from their own perspectives. Using stories, residents interpreted data about families in ways that also serve to educate mainstream society about the strengths of poor families. For example:

- Low-income Milwaukee mothers videotaped their families and produced a documentary that shows how they have the same values and desires as more affluent families. The women participate in workshops, where the video is shown to service providers and policy advocates. (See www.wccf.org/publications.html.)
- MYTOWN in Boston offers walking tours of the South End, researched and conducted by youth. Youth interview residents who share life stories and identify important places in the neighborhood's past. Through their research and tours, the youth expand the history of the city by including ethnic groups that are often disregarded in mainstream texts. They begin to develop a sense of home as they learn about their own families and communities contributions to the city's history. (See www.mytowninc.com.)
- One neighborhood in San Antonio seeks to bridge the generation gap between youth and older family members and community residents through an oral history project. Residents videotape interviews with seniors to transmit Latino knowledge and traditions that are not given visibility in textbooks and the media. (See makingconnections.utsa.edu/mcsa/home.htm.)

4. *Connect information with resources and opportunities for action.* Unlike focus groups where participants share their opinions and then walk away, study circles focus on relationship building, networking, and action. Individually and collectively, as residents have gained deeper knowledge about family issues, they have directed their energy toward volunteer and other opportunities. For example:

- In Des Moines, study circles have enhanced residents' roles as consumers, advocates, and decision-makers. The circles have linked residents' identified needs with resources, such as Habitat for Humanity, and opportunities for parent and community involvement in school programs. Study circle participants formed a neighborhood advisory council to work on common issues across neighborhoods. Several community organizations have invited the council to promote mini-grants for resident-led activities to improve neighborhoods. (See www.wallace.org/connections.htm.)
- When New Orleans residents who had participated in study circles decided that families needed a clean neighborhood, the learning partner provided them with the training and tools to record the location of trash piles and abandoned cars. The learning partner geographically coded the information and residents used the resulting maps to identify priority areas for neighborhood clean-up drives.

Just as family support programs seek to empower individual families to make informed decisions about their goals in life, they also need to create opportunities for families to deliberate ways that communities can create family-strengthening activities. Charles Bruner made the observation that "professional expertise cannot create solutions nor be a substitute for the direct experience and insight of those they are designed to help."[4] Blending local and professional knowledge is both promising and challenging; and evaluators have the unique opportunity to lend their skills as new roles for families and professionals emerge.

M. Elena Lopez, Senior Consultant, HFRP

[4] Bruner, C. et. al. *Wise Counsel: Redefining the Role of Consumers, Professionals, and Community Workers in the Helping Process.* www.cfpciowa.org/npwrwcDOC.shtml

Related Resources

The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2001). *Using Strategic Communication to Support Families.* Baltimore, MD: author. Produced for the Casey Foundation's Making Connections Project, this is a how-to guide about strategic communication for the 22 cities striving to build strong families and neighborhoods through the initiative.

Bruner, C., & Kot, V. (1999). *Resident Experts: Supporting the Neighborhood Organization and Individuals in Collecting and Using Information.* Des Moines, IA: Child and Family Policy Center. This report focuses on the ways in which neighborhood residents can be involved in collecting data about their own communities for use in reform efforts.

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Evaluating Effect Sizes in the Policy Arena

Kathleen McCartney and Eric Dearing from the Harvard Graduate School of Education provide an overview on effect size and what it reveals about the effectiveness of family support programs.

Long ago, in a political climate far, far away, statistically significant findings were enough to justify a program's effectiveness. This is no longer the case, and for good reason. Statistical significance tells you nothing about the size of the effect—that is, whether the program leads to meaningful differences in participants' lives. From significance test statistics, like *t* or *F* or *r*, researchers can compute effect size estimates in standard units, which tell more about the practical importance of interventions. The problem is that there is no agreement on how to interpret effect size estimates. As a result, many will read the results of the National Evaluation of Family Support Programs (Layzer, Goodson, Bernstein, & Price, 2001) and decide that the glass is half empty, while others will conclude that it is half full.

What Is Effect Size?

There are two kinds of effect size estimates: *r*, the Pearson product moment correlation, and *d*, which denotes the standardized difference between two means. Cohen (1977), a statistician, offered some conventions for effect sizes to help researchers conduct power analyses. With respect to *d*, he suggested that .20 was small, .50 was moderate, and .80 was large. However, social science research seldom yields effects as large as .80. If we apply Cohen's guidelines for power analyses blindly, we would end up dismissing most effects as small—even trivial. There is good reason to believe that this is not the case.

The average effect size for the effect of psychotherapy, measured across many studies, is .32. Some dismissed this effect as unimportant; after all, it represented a mere 1/3 standard deviation change in mental health. Rosenthal (1994) argued that this result should be examined in the context of other established health findings. To make his point, he asked readers to consider that the effect of aspirin in reducing heart attacks is .03! Many physicians prescribe this preventative treatment to their middle-aged patients, in part because the cost of the intervention is so small, while the benefit is potentially great.

Similarly, some scholars have dismissed the effect of child-care quality on children's development as small; however, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Early Child Care Research Network (1999) demonstrated that child-care effects were about half the size of family environment effects when similar quality measures were used. In this context, it would be difficult to argue that child-care effects are trivial.

Related Resources

Layzer, J., & Goodson, B. (2001). ***National Evaluation of Family Support Programs.*** Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates, Inc. Prepared for the Federal Administration for Children, Youth, and Families, this evaluation answers questions about the effectiveness of a variety of types of family support programs for different types of families. The evaluation is a meta-analysis of 665 studies, with experimental and quasi-experimental studies analyzed separately. www.abtassoc.com

The Effect Size of Family Support Programs

There is likely to be much argument concerning the meaning of the effect sizes from the National Evaluation of Family Support Programs (Layzer et al., 2001), a remarkable study in scope. Its authors identified 665 studies that represent 260 programs, and for each study they computed effect size estimates for nine possible outcomes. The short-term average effect sizes across studies, for these outcomes were as follows: .29 for child cognitive development, .22 for child social and emotional development, .12 for child physical health and growth, .21 for child safety, .23 for parenting attitudes and knowledge, .26 for parenting behavior, .19 for family functioning, .14 for parent mental health, and .10 for family economic self-sufficiency. The long-term average effect sizes decreased for some outcomes, but increased for others. Interestingly, the long-term effect size for family economic self-sufficiency was .39, an important finding given the significance of increases in economic resources for children in poverty (Dearing, McCartney & Taylor, 2001).

Clearly, family support produces a range of effects—with those for child cognitive and social development as well as parenting attitudes and behavior among the largest.

Clearly, family support produces a range of effects—with those for child cognitive and social development as well as parenting attitudes and behavior among the largest. Importantly, "almost every program or intervention asserted the twin goals of improved parenting (98%) and enhanced child development (91%)" (p. 2, Layzer et al., 2001). As such, one would expect greater effects in these two domains than in other domains, such as child health. And this is exactly what was found.

Average effect sizes inform the question of whether family support programs work in a very general sense. A more useful question is under what circumstances do programs work best? Because the evaluation research team coded program characteristics and related them to effect sizes, we can answer this question. The influence of program characteristics on effect sizes within randomized studies, which provide the best data, was considerable. With respect to children's cognitive development, programs were more effective when they included an early childhood education component (.48 vs. .25), when they were targeted to special needs children (.54 vs. .26), when there were peer support opportunities for parents (.40 vs. .25), and when there were parent groups rather than home visits (.49 vs. .26). For children's social and emotional development, programs were more effective when parent self development was a program goal (.56 vs. .25) and when professional staff were used rather than paraprofessionals (.43 vs. .27). Parenting effects were also moderated by program characteristics, such as peer support.

Measuring Up the Effect Size of Family Support

It is likely that data from this evaluation will be used to support a variety of policy agendas. In fact, McCartney and Rosenthal (2000) have

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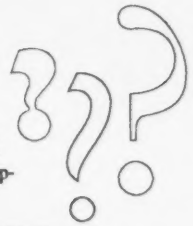
How Can We Strengthen Family Support Research and Evaluation?



Carl J. Dunst, Ph.D., from Orelena Hawks Puckett Institute, is a developmental psychologist who has been engaged in family support program development and evaluation for 20 years.

I think of family support in terms of Family Support America's principles (see box). With that in mind, we need to strengthen research and evaluation in the following ways:

1. *Get beyond the question: Does family support work?* A more useful question is: What are the characteristics of family support programs that matter most for good practice and for good parent and child outcomes? We have no agreed on measure for identifying whether a program is or is not a family support program. I am currently designing an instrument to address this.

2. *Measure the variation in program adherence to family support principles.* Once we define what a family support program is, we need to measure the extent to which programs adhere to family support principles. Then we need to relate that adherence to parent and child outcomes. This allows us to establish: 1) what good program practices are, and 2) how different levels of adherence to family support principles relate to different outcomes. My colleagues and I have looked at adherence to family support principles in two ways:

- At the *program level*, we interview program personnel about their beliefs and attitudes toward families, and establish the extent to which their practices are consistent with family support principles. Independent raters analyze interview data to establish an adherence measure.
- At the *practitioner level*, we ask parents to assess the extent to which staff interacted with them in ways consistent with family support principles.

We use these data to develop a quantitative measure of adherence, and then look at the relationship between that measure and parent outcomes (Dunst & Trivette, 2001). If more resources were available for evaluation, we would add a third adherence measure and triangulate the measures. We would add independent observations of program practices as well as ratings of program materials and messages to get an even better index of adherence.

3. *Examine the variables that moderate program practice and parent outcomes.* In terms of the relationship between practice and parent outcomes, we have looked at *parent self-efficacy* as a moderating variable. For example, in one study (Dunst, 1999) we related adherence to principles with variations in self-efficacy and parents' self-report assessments of their parenting ability. We found self-efficacy moderated the relationship between adherence to principles and parenting ability.

4. *Invest in different kinds of evaluation.* Federal and state evaluation investments need to allow for or encourage different kinds of family support evaluation. It would be interesting to see how different methods can lead to different understandings of family support program practices. For example, using case studies we differentiated between families who could secure social supports themselves versus families who identified the supports they wanted and then practitioners secured the supports for them. Families who secured the supports on their own attributed the changes to their own behavior. Where practitioners secured the supports, families made gratification appraisals for the program, but didn't attribute changes to their own behavior (Dunst, Trivette, Gordon, & Starnes, 1993).

Family Support Principles[1]

1. Staff and families work together in relationships based on equality and respect.
2. Staff enhance families' capacity to support the growth and development of all family members—adults, youth, and children.
3. Families are resources to their own members, to other families, to programs, and to communities.
4. Programs affirm and strengthen families' cultural, racial, and linguistic identities and enhance their ability to function in a multicultural society.
5. Programs are embedded in their communities and contribute to the community-building process.
6. Programs advocate with families for services and systems that are fair, responsive, and accountable to the families served.
7. Practitioners work with families to mobilize formal and informal resources to support family development.
8. Programs are flexible and continually responsive to emerging family and community issues.
9. Principles of family support are modeled in all program activities, including planning, governance, and administration.

[1] Taken from Family Support America's principles at www.familysupportamerica.org/content/learning_dir/principles.htm.

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Multi-Level Evaluation Design: California's Proposition 10

Pablo Stansbery, Senior Research Associate at Harder+Company Community Research, describes the process of developing an evaluation design that addresses the unique challenges created by California's Children and Families Act.

In November 1998, California voters approved the Children and Families Act, commonly known as Proposition 10, creating a new challenge for us as evaluators in California. The Act imposes a 50¢ surcharge tax on cigarettes and tobacco with the revenues earmarked for early childhood education programs. Proposition 10 funds are given to each of the 58 counties in California, based on the number of annual live births. Because funding is flexible, many new programs have emerged to meet the growing demand for early childhood services.

Proposition 10 requires each county, through a governing commission, to demonstrate results-based accountability. Counties must provide data indicating that the money spent to support programs has indeed had an impact on young children and their families. To document the change resulting from their funded programs, many county commissions have contracted with professional evaluation consultants for data collection and synthesis.

Designed in response to the growing literature documenting early brain development and the infant's capacity to interpret and categorize the earliest experiences, Proposition 10 has generated considerable excitement for new programs focusing on expectant mothers and children up to age 5. Funded programs work to: 1) improve children's health, 2) increase parent education and support services, 3) enhance child development and school readiness, and 4) improve systems that will support services for young children. Most counties have funded 10-30 diverse programs across these four program areas.

This diverse set of programs means that evaluation consultants confront the task of developing an evaluation plan that documents the impact of Proposition 10 funding at multiple levels:

- *Contractor level.* Each contracted agency (service provider) that receives county funds must document the impact of its unique service. Proposition 10 funds programs over a three-year period, and contractors must be able to demonstrate the value of their projects in order to secure continued or additional funding from other sources.
- *County level.* County commissions have a broader view of the programs they fund and seek an evaluation design that collapses the diverse programs into a common aggregate framework. The county must address long-range countywide objectives and answer aggregate questions concerning the development of children.
- *State level.* California has developed a statewide evaluation design to which counties must provide required information.

Evaluators are charged to develop an evaluation design that meets multiple evaluation protocols while being neither cumbersome nor duplicative. Our approach has been to build the evaluation design from the ground up as opposed to the top down. We work with each contracted agency to co-develop an evaluation design that responds to its unique program. This grassroots approach consists of the following components:

1. *Ensure contractors fully understand how their project is linked to a common set of goals and objectives.* Many agencies hire professional grant writers to develop a proposal and have limited understanding of how the program is connected to goals and objectives. We spend considerable time working with the staffs of contractors to increase their understanding of evaluation and to raise their capacity to conduct future evaluations.

2. *Provide contractors with an overview of plausible evaluation methods.* This information allows them to select the evaluation method they feel will most likely result in valid data.

3. *Assist contractors to select evaluation instruments and/or design an instrument.* We introduce agencies to standardized instruments and/or tools that are used in similar programs. In many other instances, we work with the contractors to develop an assessment instrument that they feel adequately measures the effectiveness of their program. In either case, contractors tend to assume ownership of their evaluation process, become proficient in evaluation implementation, and enhance data integrity.

4. *Build on contractor's knowledge of their targeted population.* Typically contractors have experience working with their cultural community. We co-construct the evaluation design with contractors, using their cultural competency and sensitivity. Many excellent programs have been developed to enhance the lives of young children, but have met limited success when replicated outside the original context. Much like strategic planning and program development, the evaluation component must also reflect the ecological reality of the target community.

Building an evaluation design from disparate programs also challenges the evaluator to develop a common framework for county commissions. One approach is to retrofit the multiple contractor evaluations to a common scale. We aim to reconfigure each contractors' evaluation tools into a 10-point scale. For example, a parent questionnaire with a value of 0-50 is weighted in a 10-point scale, as is a child

Table 1: An example of how different measurements can be rescaled and compared

	Common Scale Scoring System									
Contractor Assessment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Child Assessment (Max Score 50)	0–4	5–9	10–14	15–19	20–24	25–29	30–34	35–39	40–44	45–50
Parent Assessment (Max score 100)	0–9	10–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60–69	70–79	80–89	90–100

development assessment that is normally scored on a 0-100 scale. Table 1 exemplifies how we collapse the divergent assessments into a common scoring system for a countywide assessment. Although each program may employ different assessments with different scoring systems, this method enables us to look at the overall effect of all programs. It also allows us to collapse programs based on target population (e.g. Latino/Hispanic community, first time mothers), target geographic area (e.g. zip code), or target service delivery mechanism (e.g. home visitation programs).

The purpose of a grassroots evaluation design is to include service providers and community members in the evaluation process. By incorporating these key players in the evaluation design, we raise evaluation capacity at the local contractor level, cultivate a new interest in evaluation by local contractors, and redefine evaluation from an obligation to a valued method for improving service delivery. Although this approach can be labor-intensive and time-consuming, it responds to the multiple levels of evaluation required in Proposition 10, and builds local evaluation capacity, which remains long after we depart.

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Related Resources

Sutherland, C., McCroskey, J., & Halfon, N. (2001). The Challenges of Measuring the Impact of Proposition 10. In N. Halfon, E. Shulman, & M. Hochstein (Eds.), *Building Community Systems for Young Children*. UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities, 2001. This article outlines the results-based accountability approach used in the California Children and Families Act (Proposition 10) including practical recommendations for selecting indicators, data management, and building data systems.

Made to Measure? Evaluating Community Initiatives for Children. (2001). *Children and Society, 15*, 1. England: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. This issue of the British periodical, *Children and Society*, provides a good overview of the evaluation of programs for children from the perspectives of evaluators, policymakers, and service providers.

Evaluating Effect Sizes

continued from page 4

argued that data, like Rorschach inkblots, sometimes appear to serve as a projective test. Are these effects small? Evaluating effect sizes is not straightforward. As McCartney and Rosenthal (2000) write, "There are no easy conventions for determining practical importance. Just as children are best understood in context, so are effect sizes" (p. 175).

We suggest that you reflect on three points that help to provide context here. First, remember that the effect of psychotherapy is .32. Second, note that the families received support services for 15 months on average—a relatively short amount of time. Third, and perhaps most importantly, consider that effect sizes varied as a function of program characteristics, and that effects doubled with best practices. For us, both as researchers and as taxpayers, the glass is more than half full. Data from this evaluation will be of great use in guiding future family support program development.

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> new resource from HFRP

We have launched a searchable database of out-of-school time evaluation profiles on our website at:

www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/afterschool/evaldatabase.html

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Early Head Start Research-Program Partnerships

An in-depth look at the challenges presented by the evaluation of the Early Head Start program—an evaluation which required the cooperation of multiple layers of research and program partners.

Conducting research with program partners and multiple levels of research partners represents a relatively new paradigm in evaluative research. The impetus for such a paradigm arises from the need to provide more usable and timely information on complex, multidimensional, multigenerational, community-responsive programs. This new model strives to overcome the shortcomings of traditional evaluation approaches that require program interventions to be highly standardized across individuals and sites. It is difficult to apply traditional designs to evaluate national programs that are designed to be flexible enough to fit the needs of diverse families and a variety of communities. This article examines some of the benefits of research-program partnerships and creative responses to its challenges in the context of a large scale evaluation.

The Structure of the Partnerships

The Early Head Start program is an initiative to serve pregnant women and low-income families with infants and toddlers. After its establishment in 1994, the Administration on Children, Youth, and Families (ACYF) embarked on the national Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project. ACYF designed this project to encompass five major research and evaluation components: 1) a rigorous, experimental cross-site impact study[1], 2) an assessment of the program implementation, 3) local research on the mediators[2] and moderators[3] of program impacts, 4) policy studies on child care, fathers, and children's health, and 5) strategies for continuous program improvement.

Partnership has been central to the design of this research and evaluation. The study was conducted by the Early Head Start Consortium, which consists of:

- A national contractor, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR), and its subcontractor, Columbia University's Center for Children and Families at Teachers College
- 15 university-based teams of local researchers who both conduct local research and subcontract with MPR to collect national data
- The central funding agency, ACYF, which is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- The 17 participating local Early Head Start programs

New evaluations pose a number of challenges, and having multiple levels of partnership adds to these challenges ... Our resolutions for each of them brought benefits to the project as a whole.

The Benefits of the Partnerships

Each level of partnership had a special function and contributed to the synergy of the entire consortium.

The *national evaluation and national program partnership* ensured that the research informed the national training and technical assistance efforts. The close partnership also ensured that the evaluation met the needs of the national office. It ensured that: 1) the measurement of the implementation fit well with the intended program process, 2) the selected outcomes for measurement were those that the program intended to affect, and 3) the national program would obtain data on the program implementation early in the program's development.

The *national evaluation and local program partnerships* created trusting, committed, and open relationships that contributed to successfully implementing the random assignment of families to the study. These relationships also helped maintain families' participation in the study, enabled the national team to collect good implementation study data, and facilitated increased research sophistication among program staff.

The *national evaluation and local research partnerships* enabled local research teams to collect unique local data that would complement and supplement the national contractor's cross-site data. These partnerships led to collaboration among local research teams and the addition of local perspectives on national questions. Local researchers provided substantive expertise that no single national evaluation contractor could provide, while the national contractor added dimensions of continuity and synthesis that a collection of local studies could not have achieved.

Local research and local program partnerships enabled local research teams to better address the local programs' unique interests. The local programs used the research data to help them meet their continuous improvement goals.

Meeting the Challenges of a New Partnership Paradigm

New evaluations pose a number of challenges, and having multiple levels of partnership adds to these challenges. Often we were able to address these challenges by resolving the tensions created by the partners' unique perspectives. We identified four key tensions that existed within our evaluation. Our resolutions for each of them brought benefits to the project as a whole.

1. *Balancing the rigor required by experimental design with issues raised when families did not participate in the program.* The commitment to an experimental design was made by ACYF. Programs and researchers agreed to participate in this design as a condition of funding. Implementing random assignment when families applied to the program posed surprisingly few difficulties. However, many discussions

[1] Experimental study designs all share one distinctive element: random assignment to treatment and control groups. Experimental design is the strongest design choice when you are interested in establishing a cause-effect relationship. Experimental designs for evaluation prioritize the impartiality, accuracy, objectivity, and validity of the information generated. These studies look to make causal and generalizable statements about a population or impact on a population by a program or initiative.

[2] Scientific research generally looks for causal relationships between two types of variables—independent and dependent. Independent variables are those we can manipulate and dependent variables represent the outcomes being examined. A mediating variable helps explain the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

[3] A moderator variable refers to specific factors that can reduce or increase the influence of an independent variable on a dependent variable. In the social sciences, factors such as income, ethnicity, age, and gender, are common examples of moderator variables. While a mediating variable has an explanatory function, i.e., it explains how and why an outcome is manifested, a moderator variable describes the specific conditions under which a relationship between independent and dependent variables is found.

followed about the ethics of analyzing service use and outcomes from families who had left the program. Cutting-edge methodologies provided analyses of impacts that took account of program participation within the experimental design. Researchers in the partnership are continuing to analyze data to learn more about the role of service variation over time.

2. *Balancing the traditional question posed by evaluations about whether the "program worked" overall with questions focused on "what worked for whom and under what conditions."* Early Head Start programs are designed to respond to community needs and to allow families to select from program options, whether home-based, center-based, or a combination of both. Program families are diverse both across the country and within communities. The program is not restricted to a particular group, such as first-time mothers. The contractor and Consortium carefully designed a system of targeted analyses to address questions of what worked for whom within the framework of the experimental design.

3. *Recognizing the contributions and roles of a large number of partners while maintaining confidentiality, unity, and a shared vision.* Over 100 persons, representing ACYF, the national study contractors, the 15 local research teams, and the 17 research partners, comprised the partnership. Each type of partner brought its own pressures and perspectives. In 13 meetings over the six-year life of the project, Consortium members worked through details of the differences. Many off-shoot projects and lively discussions ensued as a result of the divergent interests of group members, yet policies were proposed and agreement was attained in regards to confidentiality, publications policies, local-national contributions to reports, representation on presentations, and timing of returning data to programs for their continuous improvement.

4. *Conducting an implementation study that informed program improvement along with an impact study that informs Congress about the value of the investment (ACYF 2001).* The program announcement specified the seemingly contradictory intention of conducting a traditional experimental design, while providing timely information feedback to the program at both national and local levels. The Consortium addressed this tension by establishing policies for timing the release of data so that implementation data were available early, while impact data were delayed until the 24-month data collection was complete in all sites.

The collaborating entities and individual participants in the Early Head Start Research Consortium have discovered how much effort multi-layered partnerships entail. As strong individual entities, we have had to commit time and energy to our mutual goals, acknowledge and respect the importance of our structure, and be open to change as we continued along the path to developing, disseminating, and using research-based knowledge about effective Early Head Start programs.

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ACYF website:
www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/core/ongoing_research/ehs/ehs_intro.html
MPR website:
www.mathematica-mpr.com/3rdLevel/ehstoc.htm

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Related Resources

Professor Edward Melhuish of the Institute for the Study of Children, Families, and Social Issues leads the six-year National Evaluation of Sure Start, England's early intervention initiative for children from birth to four years, their families, and communities. The evaluation consists of five modules: implementation, impact, local context analysis, cost-effectiveness evaluations, and support for local program evaluations. The website features information about each of the modules and presents frequent updates about the progress of the evaluation. www.ness.bbk.ac.uk

Knitzer, J., & Adely, F. (2001). *Learning from Starting Points: Findings from the Starting Points Assessment Project*. New York, NY: National Center for Children in Poverty. This evaluation of a Carnegie-funded systems change initiative to improve the well-being of young children examines the initiative's strategies, successes, and challenges in four cities and seven states.

Racine, D. (Ed.). (2001). *Identifying, Replicating and Improving Successful Early Childhood Programs: A Conference for Funders*. Philadelphia, PA: Replication and Program Strategies, Inc. This publication contains the papers and proceedings of a conference about advancing the early childhood field and the crucial role of evaluation in replication efforts. The report points to the need to strengthen the market for knowledge within the early childhood field.

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A conversation with Michael Quinn Patton

Michael Quinn Patton directs an organizational development consulting practice based in St. Paul, Minnesota. He is also a professor with the Union Institute & University Graduate School, a non-traditional university offering interdisciplinary doctoral degrees in applied fields. Patton is a widely known and prolific contributor in the evaluation community, and is the author of many books, including "Utilization-Focused Evaluation" and a new 3rd edition of "Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods" (2002). Prior to his current pursuits, Patton had an 18-year career on the faculty at the University of Minnesota. He is the recipient of numerous evaluation awards and served as president of the American Evaluation Association in 1988. Patton has a Ph.D. in Organizational Development and Sociology from the University of Wisconsin.

Taking advantage of Michael Quinn Patton's long-standing position in the evaluation community and interdisciplinary perspective, we asked him four questions about historical and emerging trends in evaluation practice.

Q What do you consider to be three or four "breakthrough ideas" over the last 10 to 15 years that have really helped define and influence modern evaluation practice?

A At the top of the list is **process use.** Historically, the discussion about evaluation utilization has focused on findings and what happens with an evaluation's findings or who uses them *after* the evaluation is over. Utilization-focused evaluation, in contrast, says that an evaluation's use should be considered *throughout* the evaluation process. Use is determined by how real people in the real world apply evaluation findings and what they gain from being a part of the evaluation process.

Utilization-focused evaluation says that an evaluation's use should be considered throughout *the evaluation process. Use is determined by how real people in the real world apply evaluation findings and what they gain from being a part of the evaluation process.*

In line with this idea, process use focuses on the ways in which being engaged in an evaluation can have an impact on those involved. It is about how people who participate in the evaluation learn to use and apply the logic, reasoning, and values that underlie the evaluation profession.[1] In this sense, we have seen more attention in our profession on process use. We now see evaluations being used for learning and capacity building, rather than just to generate findings.

A second important change in the evaluation field is that we have developed an extensive and diverse **menu of evaluation choices.** We have moved well beyond the idea that there are only formative and summative evaluations. In fact, in the last revision of my book, *Utilization-Focused Evaluation*[2], I identified over 100 possible evaluation approaches. This diversity means that both the evaluator and the user have the opportunity to figure out the kind of evaluation that is most appropriate for their particular situation and information needs.

A third breakthrough is the **end to the qualitative-quantitative debate.** Evaluators increasingly recognize that mixed methods have much to offer—and that the primary methodological issue is determining what methods are appropriate based on the particular evaluation situation and the needs of those who will use the findings. Quantitative and qualitative methods do different things. Each, however is valuable. And each set of methods continues to develop.

I just completed the third edition of *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods.*[3] That gave me the opportunity to review the last decade of changes in qualitative methods. Following the end of the qualitative-quantitative debate we've seen the emergence of a rich variety of qualitative evaluation approaches, including some that are very creative, such as more artistic representations for both collecting and reporting data.

And finally, there is a recognition that we need to **adapt evaluations to cross-cultural environments.** With the globalization of evaluation and increasing attention to cross-cultural diversity, evaluators are being challenged to adapt their practices in ways that are culturally sensitive and that respect diversity. This is enriching the variety of evaluation options available and pushing us to examine the culture-based assumptions that undergird traditional evaluation methods and models.

For example, with groups whose cultures are highly oral and story-oriented, like Native American groups, native groups in Latin America, and indigenous groups in Africa, the language and approach evaluators use in logic modeling, which uses flowchart-like diagrams to show relationships between strategies and outcomes, can be very off-putting. Logic models typically are linear and formal and the language of theory is fairly intimidating. Instead, we can adapt logic modeling to culturally preferred modes of communication to capture the understandings and experiences of people in oral cultures. With these cultures we can use storyboarding, where you arrange stories into a sequence of images, rather than the arrows and boxes that people who draw flowcharts prefer.

[1] See also Chapter 5 in *Utilization-Focused Evaluation* (1997) for a discussion of process use.

[2] Patton, M. Q. (1997). *Utilization-Focused Evaluation: The New Century Text,* 3rd. ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

[3] Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods,* 3rd. ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

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Q In family support, we have seen a trend toward programs that help families and communities access or collect data to secure the supports they need (e.g. jobs, child care, safety). How does the notion of assisting families and communities to get and use data in this way fit with the theory and approach of utilization-focused evaluation?

A The centerpiece of utilization-focused evaluation is that one must define the primary intended users of an evaluation and work with them to identify and achieve their intended uses. Identifying families and community members as primary intended users and working with them to articulate their needs and desired uses is completely compatible with utilization-focused evaluation. In addition to generating relevant findings for users, utilization-focused evaluations allow evaluators to facilitate the evaluation process in ways that strengthen the users' capacity to engage in evaluative thinking and undertake evaluations. This is an example of *process use* that I referred to in answering the first question. So, for example, family or community members who participate in an evaluation will not only help generate relevant findings about whatever is evaluated, but they will also learn to think evaluatively and may learn or deepen skills in interviewing or making sense of data.

Michael Quinn Patton

Let me give you an example that I cite in the new edition of my qualitative book. Rainbow Research in Minneapolis studied the feasibility of developing a transitional housing program for prostituted women. To assist in data collection they recruited five women who had been prostituted, trained them in focus group facilitation, and had them interview women leaving prostitution. For them the experience was empowering and transformational. They were excited about learning a new skill, pleased to be paid for this work, and found it rewarding. In pilot testing they critiqued the interview guide, and as a result the evaluators edited the language, content, order, and length. During interviews, it was clear they had rapport with their peers based on shared discourse and experience. For example, during a group simulation, the interviewers loudly and provocatively bantered with one another as they might have on the street. They gathered information others would have been hard pressed to secure.

The interviewers were proud of their contribution. At project's end they requested certificates acknowledging the training they received and the interviews successfully performed. For all concerned it was a positive experience, with findings that most definitely shaped the final report recommendations.

Q There seems to be an emerging trend toward the use of "scientifically-based research" in defining acceptable policy and practice on issues that include family support, early childhood, and education. What do you think "scientifically-based research" means and what, if any, are the implications for evaluators?

A I think that this language is primarily political. It is a corollary to other terms that are a part of the trend you've observed like "evidence-based practice," "best practices," and "lessons learned." Most blatantly political is this phrase "scientifically-based research." It pretends that scientists agree about findings and what constitutes good research when, in fact, these are the very things scientists debate. Consider the current debate in the medical community about the effectiveness of mammograms. Within the social sciences there are very few findings of any kind that one could pound one's fist on the table and say, "This is scientifically true." The world is more complex than that.

Asserting that some preferred approach derives from "scientifically-based research" is usually an effort by people with political agendas to wrap their own preferred policies in the mantle of science. In this so-called "information age" we find that people use the jargon of knowledge and the trappings of science in order to give more credibility to what remain fundamentally value-based proposals. They attempt to give their value and ideological preferences the cachet of being scientific.

It's not that research doesn't offer direction. But findings have to be interpreted and adapted to the new cultural and societal contexts in which they are introduced. You can't just plop these ideas—no matter how "scientifically-based" they supposedly are—from one setting into another without adapting those ideas to the new setting.

I think one has to proceed quite cautiously and help people examine the actual claims on which a proposal is based. It means that evaluators and the people we work with have to critically and thoughtfully examine the evidence that is purported to be "scientific" and draw their own conclusions. Let me hasten to add that, as an evaluator, I support evidence-based practice and I support using scientific methods to examine effectiveness. But I've also seen these phrases politicized and abused. Consumers of evaluations need to attend to "truth in packaging." Look beyond the label or assertion that some proposal is "science-based" to examine where the evidence came from and what it really shows.

Q Thinking about your comments to the previous questions, what do you feel are the main skills or competencies that evaluators need to have or develop in order to keep pace with emerging trends?

A My colleague Jean King at the University of Minnesota and her students have developed a helpful taxonomy of essential evaluator competencies.[4] I would commend their work, which was published in the Spring/Summer 2001 issue of the *American Journal of Evaluation*.

But to answer your question, evaluators need to be not only methodologically competent, they also need to be skilled at situational analysis, bring cultural sensitivities to their work, be politically sophisticated about the ways in which data and methods are used in the knowledge age, and understand how evaluation intersects with politics at all levels. Also, evaluators need to be very good communicators and facilitators, at least if they are doing utilization-focused evaluation and aiming to work with families and community members in mutually respectful and helpful ways.

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[4] King, J., Stevahn, L., Ghere, G., & Minnema, J. (2001). Toward a Taxonomy of Essential Evaluator Competences. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 22 (2): 229-247.

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Connecting Good Research and Ideas with Policymaking

Three experts in conducting Family Impact Seminars share their techniques for bringing research about families to legislators in a way that not only grabs their attention, but also supports policy change.

The need is clear. The leaders of state legislators report that they are unaware of how children and families are faring in their districts and are uninformed about the effectiveness of family policies and programs (State Legislative Leaders Foundation, 1995). As family researchers and practitioners, we have the research and practice-based information that policymakers need. The conundrum we face is this: How can we get the good information that we have at our fingertips into the hands of policymakers, where it becomes a powerful political tool for developing policies that strengthen and support families?

We have discovered four practical strategies for connecting good research and ideas with policymaking, based on nine years of experience conducting Family Impact Seminars for Wisconsin policymakers. These strategies have been fundamental to the success of the seminars and may have relevance for other efforts to link research with policymaking.

Family Impact Seminars are a series of seminars, briefing reports, newsletters, and discussion sessions for state policymakers, including legislators, legislative aides, Governor's office staff, legislative support bureau personnel, and state agency representatives. The seminars provide objective, solution-oriented information to policymakers on timely issues such as education, juvenile crime, parenting, and welfare reform.

Since 1993, 16 seminars have been held in Wisconsin, attracting 1,138 participants, including 66 different state legislators and 99 legislative offices. The seminars have proven successful in increasing policymakers' knowledge of family issues in ways that are useful in their work. For example, using retrospective pretest methodology (Pratt, McGuigan & Katzev, 2000), participants reported knowing significantly more about prescription drugs after the seminars than before (see Figure 1). In phone interviews 6 to 8 weeks following each seminar, legislators consistently rate the seminars as the second most useful information source, less useful than constituents, but more useful than print materials or lobbyists (a trend analysis was significant at $p < .003$). Legislators reported they use the information in the following ways:

- 81% to evaluate pending legislation
- 66% to share with colleagues
- 52% to identify contacts for further information
- 48% to incorporate into speeches or presentations
- 22% to develop new legislation

A valuable service family professionals can provide is helping policymakers sort out the sound from the sensational, the accurate from the agenda-driven.

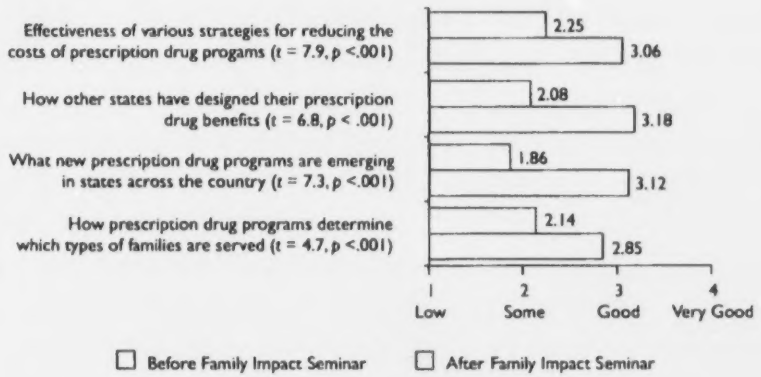
Based on this preliminary evidence of effectiveness, we have identified four pragmatic strategies for connecting research and ideas to policymaking. In Wisconsin, adhering to these strategies has carved out a niche that distinguishes us from the advocates, lobbyists, and special interest groups that regularly bombard legislators with their own legislative agendas.

1. *Provide objective, high-quality, research- and practice-based information.* In interviews, legislators complain about the piles of reports on their desks. What policymakers need is not more information, but more objective and valid information (Strickland, 1996). So, a valuable service family professionals can provide is helping policymakers sort out the sound from the sensational, the accurate from the agenda-driven. In the words of a state legislator, "...the ability to present and prepare unbiased research based on objective analysis and without political taint is truly refreshing."

The seminars have established a reputation as an objective information source by providing policymakers with a range of policy options. For example, our briefing report on competent parenting reviewed family support programs in five states and 25 policy proposals from agencies and organizations that were notably diverse in their political orientations.

2. *Be reactive rather than proactive.* Most organizations that work with policymakers have an agenda, such as introducing legislation, passing a bill, or boosting their own budget. Instead of proactively promoting our own agenda, we deliberately respond to policymakers' needs. We conduct annual inter-

Figure 1: How Much Participants Learned from the Prescription Drug Seminar


Effectiveness of various strategies for reducing the costs of prescription drug progams (t = 7.9, p <.001)
2.25
3.06
How other states have designed their prescription drug benefits (t = 6.8, p < .001)
2.08
3.18
What new prescription drug programs are emerging in states across the country (t = 7.3, p <.001)
1.86
3.12
How prescription drug programs determine which types of families are served (t = 4.7, p <.001)
2.14
2.85
1 Low
2 Some
3 Good
4 Very Good
Before Family Impact Seminar
After Family Impact Seminar

Note: Based on the 16th Wisconsin Family Impact Seminar on prescription drugs attended by 55 participants (69% response rate).

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views with 11 legislative and gubernatorial advisors so we can focus on issues policymakers are debating about or voting on.

This careful attention to timing increases legislative attendance. For example, the welfare reform seminar, held the day before the vote on Wisconsin's welfare legislation, attracted a record 28 state legislators. We also found that in policymaking circles the usefulness of information often depends on when it is provided. For example, we divided all the Wisconsin seminars into two categories: seminars in which legislation was pending (e.g., prescription drugs and welfare reform) and seminars which legislators had identified as important issues, but no legislation was pending (e.g., competent parenting and youth resilience). In t-tests, legislators rated the seminars with pending legislation significantly more useful than the others.

3. *Provide information in the format policymakers prefer.* The oral tradition in policymaking is long and strong. To build on policymakers' preference for the oral over the written word, we recommend conducting seminars, setting up personal appointments with policymakers, or organizing discussion sessions.

Surprisingly, we have learned through our work that legislators have few opportunities to become acquainted with each other, particularly with colleagues on the other side of the aisle. A valuable service professionals can provide to policymakers is to provide a neutral space for dialogue outside the contentious, interest-group-dominated environment in which policymaking takes place (Smith, 1991). One state legislator commented that "the information and ability for follow-up discussion at the round table portion of the seminar is not available to my knowledge in any other setting."

4. *Bring a family perspective to policymaking.* Most policymakers would not think of passing a bill without asking about its economic or environmental impacts. Family professionals can encourage policymakers to routinely ask about the impact of policies or programs on families. Policymakers should ask questions such as: In what ways do families contribute to social problems? How are families affected by problems? Would family-based solutions be more effective? We have available a list of 34 family impact questions on our website at www.uwex.edu/ces/familyimpact/ipfcheck.pdf.

For anyone interested in strengthening families, connecting with policymakers is important because policy shapes the context in which families operate. In the words of an anonymous state legislator, "Persist with well-researched and accredited information and keep at it. Politics belongs to the persistent" (State Legislative Leaders Foundation, 1995, p. 29).

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> evaluations to watch

The Boston Parent Organizing Network (BPON) mobilizes parents, local organizations, and communities to improve the quality of education in the Boston Public Schools. BPON provides a central connection for all of these groups; they believe that by working together, they can have a greater impact on the improvement of the quality of education in the Boston Public Schools than they can as individual organizations. The Intercultural Center for Research in Education (INCRE) is conducting an evaluation of BPON. The formative phase of the evaluation focused on three strategies: 1) minimizing the data collection burden on the organizations; 2) tailoring the data collection forms to help each grantee clarify objectives and better document parent outreach, organizing, training, and information dissemination activities; and 3) helping the organizations to use data to reflect on their progress and inform planning decisions for continued work with BPON. An outcome evaluation is underway that will address the "value-added" of the coalition structure to organize parents in school reform.

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Family Support America: Supporting "Family Supportive" Evaluation

David Diehl of Family Support America outlines their top evaluation projects: compiling an online national database of family support programs and developing new ways to measure the effectiveness of family support programs.

Since 1981, Family Support America (formerly Family Resource Coalition of America) has worked to strengthen the family support field. Over the last several years, this work has addressed the issues of evaluation and measurement. Our work seeks to align evaluation practice with the philosophy and practice of family support—to explore the ways in which evaluation can be done in more "family supportive" ways. This article describes two of our more noteworthy efforts, both of which have been supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

The National Family Support Mapping Project

The National Family Support Mapping Project is an effort to locate and collect information on every family support program in the country and create a comprehensive national database. This project arose in response to some simple, but important questions: How many family support programs are there? What families are they serving? What are the services and programs being offered? What are the funding sources for these programs?

To answer these and other questions, the Mapping Project was launched in the summer of 2000. Each participating program completes a questionnaire on its mission, the population it serves, the budget and size of the program, and details about the services and resources that it provides. We update this information and display it at the Family Support America website (www.familysupportamerica.org).

Interestingly, the Mapping Project surfaced key questions about what qualifies as "family support." Family Support America has developed a Family Support Typology that describes five basic models of how family support is delivered. We use the typology to organize the Mapping Project and create appropriate surveys for each of the five models. The five models are:

1. *Family Support Centers.* Free-standing, stand-alone centers, typically known as family support or family resource centers.
2. *Family Support Programs Nested within Larger Organizations.* Programs that are part of larger organizations (for example, schools, libraries, and programs located in Boys and Girls Clubs).
3. *Organizations that Adopt and Work from the Principles of Family Support.* Family support values and principles can be expressed in a whole range of settings, even if a concrete family support program or center is not present (for example, in the work of child welfare agencies and businesses).
4. *Community-Level Systems of Care.* Networks of multiple family support sites that represent a partnership between agencies and organizations to create a community-wide system of family support delivery.
5. *Comprehensive Community Collaborative Structures.* As part of the devolution of power to localities and communities, local "collaboratives" have arisen for the primary purpose of planning and organizing human services at the community level.

Related Resources

Smith, T. W. (1999). *The Emerging 21st Century American Family.* Chicago, IL: National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago. This paper provides an overview of the changes to the American family over the last 30 years, focusing on family composition, roles, and values.

Blank, S. (2000). *Good Works: Highlights of a Study on the Center for Family Life.* Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation. This report, about a family-service agency committed to improving the well-being of families, highlights the agency's success and suggests some of the reasons for it. **www.aecf.org/publications/#reseval**

Ahsan, N., & Cramer, L. (1998). *How Are We Doing? A Program Self Assessment Toolkit for the Family Support Field.* Chicago, IL: Family Support America. This toolkit gives family support programs specific benchmarks to help them enact the family support principles.

Table 1: Examples of Promotional Indicators

- Percent of children entering kindergarten demonstrating appropriate progress in several areas (physical-motor, cognitive, language, social and emotional development).
- Percent of parents actively engaged in their children's learning and education.
- Percent of adults who have someone to rely on (a support network).
- Percent of youth whose families set clear expectations, rules, and consequences.

"Promotional Indicators" of Family Support

The other major way in which Family Support America has been pursuing "family supportive" evaluation is developing methodologies that measure the effectiveness of family support practice. We believe that if a primary goal of family support programs is to enhance the capacities of children and families, then we should measure family strengths and capacities.

Building on the work of Carl Dunst and Carol Trivette[1], Family Support America has been working with eight states to develop "promotional indicators" as measures of family support. We are interested in collecting information on promotional indicators, which measure

[1] Dunst, C., Trivette, C., & Thompson, R. (1990). Supporting and strengthening family functioning: Toward a congruence between principles and practice. *Prevention in Human Services*, 9(1), 19-43.

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the positive development of families, rather than deficit-based indicators, which measure the negative aspects of families. (See Table 1 for examples of promotional indicators.)

Family Support America has worked with several of its state partners to form the Cross-State Work Team on Promotional Indicators. This team has been the driving force in exploring promotional indicators in state and community well-being frameworks. This group has worked to infuse promotional indicators into their state and community reports and has identified a "Core List" of promotional indicators that they recommend for states and communities interested in measuring positive development.

The concept of promotional indicators also has applications at the level of program evaluation. For programs that build capacities and contribute to positive development, promotional indicators are appropriate for measuring this change. As the saying goes, "What gets measured, gets done."

The concept of promotional indicators has been useful in several ways:

- It has helped to shed light on the current imbalance between deficit-based indicators (where we have lots of information available) and promotional indicators (where we currently have very little information).
- Because many promotional indicators tend to be "steps-on-the-way" to achievement of longer term outcomes, they have helped to highlight the importance of measuring intermediate markers of development instead of focusing exclusively on the ultimate outcome.
- Promotional indicators encourage people to think about the linkages between program practice and evaluation practice. They also encourage program planners to consider the ways in which their activities lead to increased strengths or capacities.

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Strengthening Programs and Summative Evaluations through Formative Evaluations

Two evaluators from SRI describe the benefits realized by the Parent Institute for Quality Education when they prefaced their summative evaluation with a formative evaluation.

In 1999, SRI International (SRI) received support from the Stuart Foundation to conduct an in-depth formative and summative evaluation of the Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE). PIQE is a not-for-profit community organization in California that aims to increase parents' knowledge and skills to support their children's academic achievement and ultimate enrollment in post-secondary education. In its 15-year history, PIQE has graduated more than 200,000 parents from its eight-week Parent Institute, many of whom were new immigrants to the United States.

PIQE, as a learning organization, values the opportunity to participate in both formative evaluations (which enable them to judge the worth of the program during the program activities) and summative evaluations (which enable them to judge the program at the end of the activities). The formative evaluation discussed below has allowed PIQE to assess and strengthen its current practices. Originally scheduled to last only one year, the formative evaluation was expanded to two and a half years to allow time for PIQE to implement program refinements based on the evaluation findings and to allow for a second round of observation and feedback on the new methods and materials.

This article describes how SRI and PIQE worked together on the formative evaluation and how it supported refinement of the program, identification of promising practices, and articulation of child, parent, and teacher outcomes, which will be measured in the summative evaluation.

Developing a "Theory of Change"

As an initial step in the evaluation, SRI assisted PIQE in articulating a "theory of change" to describe how PIQE expects the program components (e.g., the eight-week class, the teacher workshop) to produce their desired short-term and long-term outcomes (e.g., improved parent and teacher attitudes and behaviors, child educational achievement). All observation and interview protocols used in the evaluation have been based on this theory of change and developed collaboratively with PIQE staff.

The first year of formative evaluation (the observations and interviews discussed below) raised several questions about the goals and strategies outlined in the first conceptualization of PIQE's theory of change. As a result, PIQE revised their theory of change and articulated new measurable outcomes for parents, teachers, and students. If we had not had the opportunity to refine the theory of change through a formative evaluation, the summative evaluation would not have included measurement of some activities and outcomes now considered essential for program success. In addition to supporting a stronger summative evaluation design, collaboration around developing and refining the theory of change helped PIQE to refine its program objectives and description and to identify implementation areas that are crucial for program success.

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When Parents Assess Schools

M. Elena Lopez, from Harvard Family Research Project, discusses the role that data plays in helping parents assess, and then work to change, the performance of their children's schools.

What can parents[1] do when their child's school is at-risk? In a growing number of communities plagued with low-performing public schools, parents are taking action. Through institutional mechanisms like school-based management teams, or with the backing of outside and independent community organizations, parents are raising questions about the performance of their children's schools. These parents are constructing new roles as leaders and partners in school reform, and offering an alternative to traditional school-managed parent involvement activities. In this transformative process, school data can be used to deepen parents' understanding of issues and widen the scope of their engagement.

How do parents access, interpret, and use data?

Standards-based reform has over time made more data on student performance and school conditions available to the broader community. While the data are available, they are not always accessible to parents, or presented in a format and language that parents can understand. To fill this void, a number of intermediary organizations offer assistance with understanding school outcomes data, analyzing school performance issues, and developing solutions to schooling problems for community organizing groups and parent activists.

For example, the Institute of Education and Social Policy (IESP) at New York University helps community-based organizations tackle a range of school issues, including overcrowding, teacher quality, and closing the achievement gap. It helped Cypress Hills Advocates for Education, a group of 65 parents and community members, with data analysis and presentation on school overcrowding. The group then convened a meeting with public officials and used the data to buttress their reform proposals. Parents got a commitment from the superintendent to create a task force to develop short- and long-term plans. The district implemented a short-term plan of "rezoning," and now the group is pressuring the superintendent to move forward on the long-term plan, which includes securing funding for new buildings.

Empowering parents through data

1. *Data can enlighten parents about school-related issues.* Data can inform parents about standards-based reform and help them monitor school performance. Anne Henderson of IESP suggests that student work, as a form of data, is a very powerful tool. At the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership in Kentucky, a training institute for parent leaders, parents compare students' work at different levels of proficiency, and discuss why and how the standards are being met or not met. Parents then use their understanding of standards to formulate what questions to ask of teachers and administrators.

2. *Data can equip parents to participate in decision making.* Parents recruited to serve on school management teams need to understand how data can help them determine priorities and increase school accountability. The wider school community also benefits from access to and understanding of the data, allowing them to share their concerns with parent representatives. The New York Urban League trains parents who serve on state-mandated school leadership teams. These teams, composed of an equal number of parents and school staff, are charged to develop a comprehensive school plan and a budget to support it. Adrian Lewis from the New York Urban League notes, "It is a myth that parents are not interested in getting involved. If they are hesitant, it's because they have no information to be effective. With our training, a lightbulb goes on. We use school report cards to show the link between the data and the work that the school leadership teams have to do."

3. *Data can help change the relationship between parents and schools.* Many states require that districts make school performance

[1] The term "parent" is used broadly to refer to biological parents, extended family members, and other adults with primary responsibility for the care of a child.

Related Resources

Institute for Education and Social Policy, New York University. (2001). ***Mapping the Field of Organizing for School Improvement: A report on education organizing in Baltimore, Chicago, Los Angeles, the Mississippi Delta, New York City, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Washington D.C.*** This report maps the field of community organizing for school reform in eight cities nationwide. It describes patterns of participation, strategies, and accomplishments, as well as recommendations for strengthening this movement.

Hirota, J., Jacobowitz, R., & Brown, P. (2000). ***The Donors' Education Collaborative: Strategies for Systemic School Reform.*** Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall Center for Children. This report evaluates an initiative to build broad-based constituencies to advocate for improvements in New York City public education. It includes the initiative's successes as well as lessons learned.

Brown, C., Gold, E., & Simon, E. (2001). ***Looking for Indicators of the Impact of Community Organizing for School Reform.*** A Joint Working Paper of the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform and Research for Action. The "Indicators Project" is developing a series of indicators to gauge the success of community organizers in promoting successful student learning and strong communities. This working paper provides an overview of selected indicators, measures, and data sources. **www.crosscity.org/pdfs/LookingforIndicators.pdf**

The Parent Press Fall 2001 newsletter from Parents for Public Schools is a resource for parents who want to improve their children's schools by using data. In addition to providing a concise overview of the types of data relevant to school reform, the issue contains numerous practical suggestions for parents about using data to improve education. **www.parentspress.com/index.html**

The School-Level Assessment Database CD-ROM, available from the U.S. Department of Education's Planning and Evaluation Service, contains assessment scores for 80,000 public schools. To order, contact Meredith Miller at 202-401-8368 or meredithmiller@ed.gov.

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data public by posting it on their websites or publishing it in the local newspaper. Henderson says, "These requirements have changed parents' dependency on schools for access to information and to observe classes and meet teachers." Parents also collect their own data. In Kentucky, parents investigate how often teachers assign writing as part of a school-community effort to improve writing skills in the school.

4. *Data can help parents leverage change.* Rochelle Nichols Solomon of the Philadelphia Education Fund believes that data has to be presented in ways that will not overwhelm parents and community members, but will give them hope. She says, "The flip side of using data is that it can be devastating. For example, when you look at the percentage of students with minimum college preparation in our neighborhood schools, 45 percent have completed the minimum college sequence. That means that in college they will still have to take remedial classes. How do we change this? You have to give people examples of what is doable; otherwise, people think it is hopeless. You need to find where the data looks different and what are promising strategies. You can point to the need for extended learning and block scheduling. You can point to increased professional development for teachers. The data leads to big questions, but it can also help people figure out what they can do to address an issue."

Researchers and evaluators have a role in helping parents and communities understand personal education concerns from a systems perspective through the use of well-designed data presentations. Data alone, however, is not sufficient to effect change. It is a tool that uncovers urgent problems whose solutions defy quick fixes. For this reason, it is important that parents have a structure—whether through community-based organizing groups or formal school-community decision-making teams—that will sustain their long-term advocacy.

M. Elena Lopez, Senior Consultant, HFRP

Demystifying Data

Recognizing that many parents of children in low performing schools do not realize how poorly their school is doing, Institute of Education and Social Policy (IESP) provides them with disaggregated and comparative data. Kavitha Mediratta from IESP explains, "We try to use data to demystify what is going on. We help parents understand what the Board of Education's data says is happening in their child's school. How many students are meeting the reading standards? Are more students referred to special education in this school than in similar schools in the district and the whole city? Once the group develops its analysis, we develop data presentations that help them make their arguments more forcefully."

Strengthening Programs

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Comprehensive Observations and Interviews

SRI conducted observations of six complete eight-week sessions of the Parent Institute, as well as interviews of host school principals and teachers, parent participants, and program facilitators. SRI and PIQE staff met several times to discuss the findings and the ways SRI could provide further feedback or support.

SRI also developed a draft set of benchmarks (milestones that would indicate that the desired changes had occurred) to help support PIQE staff in tracking their progress. PIQE staff reviewed the draft benchmarks and helped refine them so they could be used to manage their change process. Program staff have used the formative evaluation findings and data collection tools in several ways. For example, they have clarified lesson objectives, developed sample lesson plans, revised program curriculum, created new facilitator training materials, and revised the program operations manual.

Real-Time Feedback

To examine the extent to which the program refinements were successfully being implemented, PIQE staff asked SRI to conduct additional "real-time" observations (provide feedback on each class observed within a day or two of the observation so that they could use the information to help other instructors who were about to teach the same lesson). SRI provided real-time feedback on 10 class sessions, each taught by a different instructor, during the 2000-2001 school year. After each observation, SRI researchers distributed detailed observation notes and held telephone debriefing meetings with PIQE staff to discuss the notes and give immediate verbal feedback. SRI produced a summary of the real-time feedback with descriptions of what did and did not work in program implementation for PIQE to use as an instructor training tool.

Real-time feedback allowed SRI to look at parts of the program that PIQE wished to have examined in more detail and areas in which PIQE was specifically trying to apply changes based on earlier feedback. The real-time feedback was extremely useful, but it would not have been possible or as useful without the earlier comprehensive observations and interviews. The combination of these two approaches worked extremely well.

The Value of the Formative Evaluation Method

Formative evaluation is often overlooked when organizations believe that their programs are already running according to plan or when resources are limited. Our experience with the PIQE program, however, suggests that formative evaluation is valuable for mature as well as new programs. In addition, we found that our formative work has built a stronger foundation for the summative evaluation scheduled to begin in May 2002. We hope that our experience encourages others involved in program evaluations to include formative research methods in their evaluations whenever possible.

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Participatory Action Research: Building Community Capacity through Collaboration, Education, and Action

Priscilla Little, from Harvard Family Research Project, describes the implementation of the Milwaukee Participatory Action Research project and how it improved the evaluation and advocacy skills of all its participants.

The primary goal of the Milwaukee Participatory Action Research (PAR) project is to build a knowledge base about the impact of the devolution of social policy from the federal level to state and local levels, while promoting grassroots participation in policy implementation.[1] Specifically, the PAR project engages a team of individuals representing community-based agencies, advocates, legislators, and welfare recipients and local welfare implementing agencies (in Wisconsin these are referred to as W-2 agencies, W-2 being the name for the state's welfare-to-work program), in dialogue around issues of welfare reform in Milwaukee's Hmong and Hispanic communities.

The PAR Project

The PAR project works in partnership with community-based agencies, two local W-2 agencies, 30 Hmong and Hispanic welfare recipients, and the Hmong African American Friendship Association. It employed a three-phase implementation model:

Phase 1. Develop and implement a participatory framework for documenting personal, family, and community histories regarding W-2. Express concerns and identify barriers to W-2 participation.

Phase 2. Carry learning to a larger community through storytelling, community forums, and roundtable dialogue for the purposes of refining, broadening, and creating new strategies for addressing concerns and barriers.

Phase 3. Develop information sharing and collaborative networks to sustain learning and the growth process.

Seven monthly sessions were held with Hmong community members; each session lasted two and a half hours. After an initial introduction and overview in session one, subsequent sessions allowed participants to build trust, explore issues, and initiate productive conversation by using techniques such as incident analysis, active listening, and participation. Program planners noted that the use of drawing exercises provided an excellent way to stimulate discussions among participants with significant cultural and language barriers.

In addition to sessions with community members, four meetings were held with agency staff and caseworkers to discuss how the project could fit into the existing W-2 programs.

A significant outcome of the PAR project was the understanding among participants of the complexity and barriers to raising the skills and employment potential of Hmong families who are current and former welfare recipients. This understanding led PAR participants to work with a local community college to develop a proposal for one of the W-2 agencies to fund a comprehensive family literacy model that will significantly increase the educational options for Hmong families that participate in W-2.

As a follow-up to the PAR project, researchers are conducting group processes with Hmong family participants to determine the economic and family well-being outcomes that they are experiencing, now that they have left welfare.

Reflections on the PAR Process

The PAR process facilitated the development of transferable skills such as problem solving, critical thinking, and group learning among the participants. Additionally, the PAR process enabled them to identify a set of four learning outcomes that could be applied to other projects utilizing a PAR approach:

1. Learning to develop overarching themes about the underlying values/assumptions of a program.
2. Learning the importance of political connections.
3. Learning about program processes and outcomes.
4. Learning to take action.

PAR implementers note that the single most important element for the success of this type of collaborative research project is the commitment to learning and improvement on the part of all participants.

Priscilla Little, Project Manager, HFRP

For more information about the PAR project, please contact: Dr. Kalyani Rai, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Center for Urban Community Development, Milwaukee, WS, 53201, 414-227-3271, kalyanir@uwm.edu.

For more information about the W.K. Kellogg Scholar Practitioner Program, please contact Dr. Ronald Walters, The Academy of Leadership, University of Maryland, 11-7 Taliaferro Hall, College Park, MD, 20742, 301-405-1787.

Related Resources

Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. (2001). *How Can Faith-Based Service Providers Help Families Leaving Welfare?* Washington, DC: author. This research brief explores the opportunities and challenges raised by the charitable choice provision included in welfare reform legislation.

Naples, M. I. (2001). *Family Leave for Low-Income Working Women: Providing Paid Leave through Temporary Disability Insurance, The New Jersey Case.* Washington, DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research. This research brief makes the case for paid family leave for the care of newborns or ill dependant relatives, and outlines policy alternatives for financing and administering such a program.

[1] The project was conducted as part of the Scholar Practitioner Program of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation Devolution Initiative, a five-year initiative that provides support to over 30 grantees, which include researchers, policy analysts, and state and national advocacy organizations, in order to support and promote public participation in informing policy agendas and decisions around welfare and health care issues. The Scholar Practitioner Program was created to provide relevant information, education, and research at the grassroots level to inform public policies and build the capacity of minority scholars to engage in community-based research. As such, it serves as a bridge between academia and grassroots communities in five states across the U.S.

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Lessons from a Partnership Model Project

Kathe Johnson shares her experience from her work with the Women and Poverty Public Education Initiative, outlining four lessons she learned from this project, which connects professional academic and low-income women.

Our project, the Women and Poverty Public Education Initiative (WPPEI), links the expertise of professional academic women with the skill development of low-income women. We work to build the economic capacity of low-income women and to ensure that their voices are heard in the public policy decisions that affect them. We have learned through our work that this partnership model between academic and low-income women has the potential to shape policy change, but is not without its pitfalls.

Operating in four Wisconsin communities, WPPEI is staffed by a director, two regional coordinators, and two local coordinators at each site. The local coordinators form the heart of the partnership model, consisting of one academic professional and one low-income woman. They keep informed of welfare-related issues, which are shared with the larger membership. They also initiate projects to address these issues and serve on the boards of local agencies.

To meet our goals we engage in research, public education, public policy campaigns, and advocacy for low-income women. Our recent achievements include:

- Our local coordinators organized a county collaborative to assess the needs of low-income families in the county and to take steps to alleviate their problems.
- Our local coordinators started a Speakers Bureau in 1999 that offers low-income women training in communication and public policy skills. Women who take the training speak at conferences, college classrooms, and other forums to share their insights about public policy and how it affects them.
- We published the results of a four-year longitudinal study of women who either received, or were eligible to receive, public benefits.
- We published an educational video and booklet examining the impact of welfare reform, based on a survey of 100 women in poverty from each site location.

Although partnership model projects can shape policy change, my experience suggests that we need better preparation among both the professional and low-income women to take full advantage of this model. Our project has learned several important lessons along the way to improve the design of this partnership:

1. *Professional academic women need further training about ways to examine the obstacles to low-income partners' participation in project implementation.* Over time, the low-income membership of WPPEI declined to an almost negligible number. Most of the remaining members were women in academia. I believe this happened because the training for the women in academia regarding the real life difficulties of the women in poverty was inadequate. With better understanding, the professional academic members can design projects that offset the material and social divide between themselves and the low-income members.

2. *Professional academic women need to assess what tools low-income partners may need and budget accordingly for compensation, communication, and transportation costs.* Professionals usually have credit cards, cell phones, personal computers, Internet service, reliable vehicles, and access to other tools to facilitate their participation. The absence of these tools often limits participation of low-income members. This is especially the case when telephone conference calls and email are common means of communication. Even something as simple as distributing notebooks to record project-related activity begins to bridge the difference between partners.

3. *Partnership projects need to train low-income partners comprehensively.* Professionals often use words and acronyms that are unfamiliar to most people, especially to those who have a limited formal education. In meetings where such language is used, low-income women may feel uncomfortable and may not fully share their experiences. Low-income members need to be trained about project terminology and acronyms, public policy systems, and the names and goals of relevant organizations. They should also be exposed to role-playing sessions to prepare for situations in new social arenas that might cause embarrassment.

4. *A project that employs low-income women should ensure their access to events that expand their social networks.* Professionals usually have access to a network of individuals who can help move a project forward politically and financially. Low-income women usually have not moved far from their cultural and social milieu and have limited contacts with important people. To compensate for this, they need exposure to networking opportunities. For example, if a project goal is to reduce local crime, then the project's budget should include money for low-income women to attend a Crimestoppers dinner, where they can build relationships with law enforcement, school district, and service agency representatives.

I believe that the research, advocacy, and public education activities of a partnership model project can make an impact on the lives of low-income families. As such, adequate forethought and attention to the needs of *all* the members of the project are vital to its long-term success.

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Related Resources

De Vita, C. J., & Mosher-Williams, R. (Eds.). (2001). *Who Speaks for America's Children.* Washington, DC: Urban Institute Press. This book presents essays by child policy experts about advocacy strategies and their influence on policy. Case studies highlight the changing role of child advocacy organizations.

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From Health Consumers to Health Consumer Researchers

A grassroots network of families of children with special health care needs shares the lessons they learned about conducting research to improve the health care for their children.

Families can take leading roles in sponsoring and conducting health consumer research, with the ultimate goal of improving the U.S. health care system. This is an important message of Family Voices, a grassroots network of 40,000 families and friends of children with special health care needs. In each state, two volunteer family coordinators serve as organizers, educators, and advocates for children with special health care needs.

Family Voices and the Heller School at Brandeis University surveyed 2,220 families to fill the knowledge gap about children with special needs. While data existed about narrow constituencies of children with special heath needs, e.g. children with cerebral palsy or those receiving early intervention services, there was none about the population as a whole. Gathering this information was the first step to providing effective and comprehensive health services to *all* families with special health needs.

Nora Wells, Director of Research Activities at Family Voices, offers these lessons for family and community groups that wish to become involved in research:

- *Recognize that data provides the key to informed action for systemic change.* In order to serve the complex and diverse needs of families of children with special health needs, Family Voices realized that it was vital to gather information systematically about how families are faring, what is working for them and what is not, and what can be improved.
- *Collaborate with an established research institution in a partnership based on mutual respect and equality.* Both the Heller School and Family Voices understood that the other was invaluable: the Heller School for its research expertise and Family Voices for its intimate knowledge of the issues relevant to families of children with special health needs. Family Voices' small national staff and the state-level family coordinators participated in research design, survey instrument construction, sampling, analysis, and report writing. This partnership greatly influenced the credibility of the research to policymaking audiences while remaining relevant and useful to families.
- *Support families by providing timely and useful information.* As a result of the survey, Family Voices published two booklets to meet families' expressed needs for information. One booklet makes the survey results available to families in simple and clear language, so that families can learn how others are coping with similar issues and what areas of health care delivery particularly need improvement. The second booklet helps families and health plans learn about programs and policies for children with special needs in managed care. This booklet is based on a series of interviews that Family Voices coordinators conducted with 17 managed care providers in 12 states in order to understand health plan programs and policies and how plans can better serve children with special needs.

Family Voices believes that every person has the ability, right, and responsibility to speak up about services he/she needs for his/her family and to provide feedback about the adequacy of those services. When families play an active role in developing and conducting research, they enhance their capacity to advocate effectively for an improved system of services.

Flora Traub, Research Analyst, HFRP
M. Elena Lopez, Senior Consultant, HFRP

Reference

Krauss, M. W., Gulley, S., Leiter, V., Minihan, P., Sciegaj, M., Wells, N., & Anderson, B. (2000). *The Family Partners Project: Report on a National Survey of the Health Care Experiences of Families of Children with Special Health Care Needs.* Boston, MA: Brandeis University and Family Voices.

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A PERIODICAL ON EMERGING STRATEGIES IN EVALUATING CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

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from the director's desk

Heather Weiss

As evaluators we are convinced that having the right information available at the right time goes a long way to help organizations improve their program performance and meet their goals. This assumption, however, merits further scrutiny about an organization's readiness to use evaluation information and the evaluation-program relationship. With today's policy and funding environment focused on outcomes, it is crucial more than ever before to not only make sure those outcomes get measured for accountability purposes, but to examine the conditions that facilitate evaluation for continuous improvement and high performance.

In this issue of *The Evaluation Exchange* on continuous improvement in human service organizations, we learn that the management of people in an evaluation can be harder than the management of data. Organizations with a culture that values inquiry, exploration, and discovery, as well as self-examination, are on the forefront of using evaluation to fine tune their programs and be innovative. Where this "culture of inquiry" is lacking, evaluators need to be prepared to adopt new roles as change agents who can dispel fears about evaluation and nurture change in an organization's mindset.

Our contributors assert that for organizations to make use of evaluation findings, the evaluation process needs to be relevant to individuals and to support learning, which leads to new insights and actions within an organization. To this end, evaluators must assume the role of facilitators of learning, engaging participants in a meaningful and non-threatening way to discuss findings and take next steps.

Evaluators are using diverse evaluation approaches and designing tools that are tailored to the program or organization being evaluated. Articles in this issue describe various options—reflective assessment, risk analysis, standards of excellence, balanced scorecard, matrices and portfolios, and an outcome-based information system. Evaluators are also striving to clarify their presentations and apply effective training techniques. Finally, they are providing organizations with performance measurement systems to address equity issues through various design options.

A recurrent theme in this issue is that organizations can also go overboard in their focus on outcomes. Our contributors advise, "be realistic and set incremental goals." But even when these are established, evaluators and program practitioners face the challenge of identifying appropriate performance levels and measures for these goals, and determining productive next steps. Understanding the reasons behind evaluation findings about performance is essential to deciding follow-up actions and who should be accountable for what.

It is not enough, though, to think about evaluation for continuous improvement and high performance solely within an organizational context. Evaluators and practitioners need to think about building *a learning system for a field of practice*, such as juvenile justice or full-service schools, and to connect the knowledge gained from individual evaluations to pinpoint gaps, raise new questions, and identify the next generation of best practices.

The HFRP research team and I hope you find this issue provokes new questions and insights. We invite you to share your ideas with us at hfrp@gse.harvard.edu.

Heather

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Mindset Matters

Ann Dykman of MPR Associates illustrates that an organization's culture and mindset are important factors in the success of using evaluation for continuous improvement.

Evaluation is essential to any organization's continuous improvement, but eliciting the full cooperation of staff who are unfamiliar with the concept can require more than simply providing top-notch tools and training. Before getting down to the nitty-gritty of performance measures and data collection, evaluators may first have to help create a workplace culture that values inquiry and critical self-review.

In effect, they may have to be cheerleaders for the process itself.

This is a key lesson that evaluation consultants Georgiana Hernández and Mary Visher[1] learned from their involvement in the two-year Working on Workforce Development (WOW) project, sponsored by the James Irvine Foundation in 1998. The San Francisco-based foundation theorized that if nonprofit organizations know how to gather and use performance data, their services will improve. WOW was created to test the theory by sending in expert evaluators to help six Bay Area employment and training organizations refine their performance measurement systems.

Together with Irvine, the evaluators crafted a training plan around several performance measurement workshops and conducted follow-up visits to help agency staff apply the concepts within their own workplaces. Soon after the first workshop, however, Hernández and Visher sensed a challenge to their well-laid plans. Not only were the participating agencies at different levels of readiness for evaluation, they also had varying views about whether the effort was even worthwhile. And, as it happened, motivation had the most impact on an agency's progress.

"It takes a conscious effort to foster agency-wide shifts in mindset, norms, and practices," wrote Hernández and Visher in *Creating a Culture of Inquiry*, the Irvine monograph that details the WOW project. "It takes organizational changes in belief systems about the value of grounding decisions that affect clients in hard data."

In the end, the experiment successfully increased the evaluation capacity of most of the nonprofits, and both the consultants and the foundation felt it yielded valuable lessons for other funders, evaluators, and technical assistance providers.

[1] Hernández is president of Hernández & Associates and Visher is associate director of program evaluation and planning at MPR Associates.

Indicators of Inquiry-Minded Cultures

- Organizations that create new lines of communication across and within their divisions.
- Organizations that move from using performance measurement in one department or division to using it throughout.
- Organizations that revise their performance measurement plan to adapt to new information, conditions, ideas, or policies.
- Organizations that use performance findings as a springboard for discussions about their values, mission, and hidden assumptions in their practices.

Source: Hernández, G., & Visher, M. G. (2001). *Creating a culture of inquiry*. San Francisco: The James Irvine Foundation. Available at www.irvine.org.

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Lesson One – Take Time to Build Relationships and Trust

Hernández and Visher visited each agency twice in the year before the training was set to begin. They interviewed managers, collected data where possible, toured the facilities, and talked to other staff to aid their understanding of the agencies' capacity for self-evaluation. These initial assessment visits gave the evaluators time to build rapport with participants and provided a baseline against which to measure progress. It was during this stage that Hernández and Visher first realized their training plan had to change.

"We *thought* we could go in cold," without much of an understanding of each agency's culture, Visher recalls. "We learned that it takes time for an organization's employees to trust you." For example, agency employees were concerned about opening their performance up to scrutiny in case that might influence their relationship with the foundation. "Early on we had to ensure them that the outcome data reported in their performance measurement systems would not be used as a basis for funding," Visher says.

In retrospect, both the consultants and the foundation also questioned whether offering grants was a good idea, given that the most important determinant of commitment and progress turned out to be an agency's enthusiasm for the project rather than grant size, organization size, stability, finances, or reputation.

Lesson Two – Involve More Staff Throughout the Process

The foundation and the consultants had already decided on the structure for the technical assistance before they first visited the project participants. Soliciting more upfront involvement from the participants would have moved the project along much faster, say Hernández and Visher. Instead it took many months to get everyone on board.

The WOW organizations that were most successful in developing their performance measurement plans seemed to be those that rallied the broadest participation of staff, while keeping midlevel and top managers active throughout the process.

Lesson Three – Clarify Roles, Responsibilities, and Expectations

"We should have laid our cards out from the beginning and scaled back on the more grandiose, overreaching goals [such as expecting to see improved performance at the end of two years]," says Martha Campbell, Irvine's director of evaluation. "Instead, what you need are shorter-term, mutual expectations."

Both the foundation and the consultants suggest that these steps be followed in any performance measurement project:

- Ask each organization to set up a project team, with a lead person, to spearhead the planning process.
- Develop a joint memo of understanding that articulates the project purpose, the expected "deliverables," the project timeline and time requirements, and the roles and responsibilities of designated agency staff and technical assistance providers.
- Make sure everyone agrees on the level of staff time to be invested.

Hernández stresses the need for "constant reality checks" that restrain overly enthusiastic agency staff who want to take on too much. For example, three directors decided to develop plans that encompassed not only employment and training services, but their entire agency operations—including facilities and operations, administration and fundraising, and for-profit business divisions for those who had them. Others wanted to document and measure every single action case managers took every day.

"There can be an excitement about what can be measured, but it can be exhausting to do it all," Hernández says. "In our follow-up conversations we learned that some of the agencies have dropped half of the indicators they came up with."

Lesson Four – Create a Schedule That Works

Because of potential staff turnover and the differing levels of commitment among agencies, the evaluation consultants found they got better results when they worked intensively with participants over shorter periods instead of visiting them less frequently throughout the year. But this is not a rigid rule. Ultimately, the organization that is trying to measure and improve its performance should determine the pace that it feels comfortable with, and then develop a schedule and commit to it.

Lesson Five – Nurture Deep Cultural Changes

To their surprise, Visher and Hernández found they had to spend a good deal of time nurturing change in the organizational mindset around the value of self-evaluation as they were helping organizations improve their technical capacity to use data. They had to get agency staff interested in thinking about how to quantify their day-to-day work and how to ground programmatic decisions in hard data. This was a new approach for many and for some it felt quite threatening.

Visher suggests an initial brainstorming session that teases out the types of work staff members do each day with clients. These are the practices that will be linked with desired outcomes. Once staff begin to see their work being valued, Visher says the change in mindset is so tangible "you can almost hear the click." As the evaluation consultant continued to work with the agencies on their performance measurement system, they began to identify the changes in mindset and to foster them (see box on page 2).

Continuous improvement depends on the adoption of performance measurement as a core value, says Hernández. "I believe wholeheartedly that the process helps staff chart and then move along the same path within the organization, so in the end, managers don't have to spend so much time handling crises and putting out fires."

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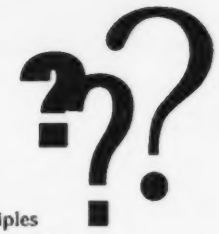

What Is a Learning Approach to Evaluation?

Rosalie T. Torres, Ph.D. is Director of Research, Evaluation, and Organizational Learning at the Developmental Studies Center in Oakland, California. Her 24-year career in evaluation has focused on researching, teaching, writing about, and practicing a learning approach to evaluation.

A learning approach to evaluation is contextually-sensitive and ongoing, and supports dialogue, reflection, and decision making based on evaluation findings (Torres & Preskill, 2001). Its primary purpose is to support learning that can ultimately lead to effective decision making and improvement in department, programmatic, and organization-wide practices. It is based on the premise that to achieve learning and improvement, evaluation must:

- Consider (but not be completely governed by) the context in which it is being conducted (i.e., stakeholders' information needs, political realities, organizational culture).
- Be conducted routinely.
- Provide opportunities for stakeholder participation—in particular, opportunities to ask questions about, discuss, and reflect on the meaning of evaluation findings.

A learning approach can be taken with any kind of evaluation. The goal is to conduct the most valid, relevant, and credible evaluation possible—given the information needs and the existing political, logistical, and resource constraints—*and* to actively facilitate *learning from* the evaluation and taking action. This means establishing a balance between accountability and learning roles for evaluation.

Learning occurs best among individuals who regard the information they are reviewing (i.e., evaluation findings) as credible and relevant to their needs. Involving stakeholders in designing and conducting an evaluation helps assure their ownership of, and interest in, its findings.[1] Learning also occurs best among individuals who have an opportunity to ask questions about evaluation methods, consider other sources of information about the topic in question (including their own direct experiences), and at the same time hear others' perspectives.

One way to take a learning approach with any evaluation, whether you have been involved in conducting it or not, is to enable (or plan for) deep consideration of its findings and the planning of next steps. Often evaluators and their clients think the major work of an evaluation is complete when the final evaluation report has been written. To the contrary, some of the most productive work of an evaluation occurs when stakeholders convene to review and discuss findings and implications. The meeting should be conducted with the key principles of adult learning and staff development in mind: have participants engage with the learning material; see, hear, and do something with its content; and integrate new knowledge with what they already know (Torres, Preskill, & Piontek, 1996).

Consider these guidelines for working sessions of several hours or even over the course of a daylong retreat to review, discuss, and interpret evaluation findings:

1. Begin with a presentation of findings via posters, overheads, a PowerPoint presentation, or other form of visual display so that participants receive and process the findings together rather than individually.
2. Give sufficient opportunity for participants to ask questions about the evaluation procedures and data analysis.
3. Provide an interactive experience for participants to engage with the findings. For example, have participants work in small groups to develop conclusions based on the findings. (The groups might each take a different section of the findings.)
4. Have each group present their conclusions, and give the evaluator an opportunity to comment on or raise questions about conclusions that may have been missed or overstated.
5. Post findings and conclusions around the room and have groups of participants visit each poster, recording their thoughts about implications and actions to consider.
6. Debrief in a large group discussion on the implications and actions.
7. Conclude with a more detailed action-planning activity or definite next steps which will lead to action planning.

[1] See Patton, 1997 and Preskill & Torres, 1999 for more about stakeholder involvement in all phases of evaluation.

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Increase Equity Without Losing Efficiency

Professor of Public Administration, Joseph Wholey, explains that contrary to popular thought, it is possible to increase program equity without compromising program efficiency—through performance measurement and management systems.

Equity—the fairness with which organizations allocate resources, deliver services, or achieve outcomes—is an important value for both public and nonprofit organizations. It is often suggested that equity and efficiency are incompatible, and that efforts to improve program effectiveness run counter to efforts to increase equity. For example, a job training program may enroll only the most job-ready clients in an effort to increase its number of placements. This approach will increase the program's efficiency, but reduce equity in the delivery of its services. In situations like this, being *results-oriented* conflicts with being *equitable*.

Program equity and efficiency do not have to be incompatible. If policymakers and senior managers agree that equity is important, they can: first, define equity goals, second, develop performance measurement systems that emphasize both equity and efficiency, and third, adjust management systems to create greater equity in their programs and in the communities that they serve.

Defining Equity Goals

The first step to increasing equity is achieving agreement among stakeholders on what the equity goals are. Evaluability assessment, a process for determining whether a program is ready for useful evaluation work, can help create agreement on equity goals. Through this process, policymakers and program managers can: compare and contrast the performance expectations of key stakeholders; reach a reasonable level of agreement in defining the program's intended inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes; establish or revise the program's goals; and develop or revise the strategies for achieving these goals.[1]

Involving stakeholders who represent different population groups in this process helps organizations to develop goals and strategies that include a clear focus on equity. If key stakeholders emphasize equity in service delivery or service outcomes, then the program's goals should reflect that emphasis.

Measuring Progress in Creating Equity

Organizations have many options regarding what types of performance measurement systems they can use to address equity concerns.

Organizations can create performance measurement systems that directly measure equity. For example, an organization may use role-playing to evaluate whether different groups of job applicants, home buyers, or renters receive equal treatment. "Paired role-playing has been used since the 1970s by private and public fair housing organizations to test for discrimination against minority home seekers by real estate and rental agents."[2]

Organizations can use performance measurement systems that report separate performance scores for different population groups. For example, to encourage effective services to disadvantaged populations, many school districts now measure and report both overall student performance and the performance of various minority groups. Such efforts will grow as the federal government encourages and requires state and local educational efforts that "leave no child behind."[3]

Organizations can use statistically-adjusted measures of effectiveness or statistically-adjusted performance standards that reflect the influence of client characteristics. For many years, for example, the U. S. Department of Labor has adjusted performance standards for job training programs to reflect the influence of client characteristics and other degree-of-difficulty factors.[4]

Adjusting Management Systems for Equity

Once organizations have set equity goals and developed performance measurement systems that address equity concerns, they can develop results-oriented management systems to help increase equity. Though attention often tends to focus on equity of inputs, the most interesting and challenging issues typically relate to equity in service delivery or outcomes.

Individuals and organizations seeking to increase equity must find ways to change management systems to create the incentives needed to change behavior. If the incentive systems don't change, nothing will change. Intangible incentives may include regular

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[1] See Related Resources: Wholey, J. S. (1983); Wholey, J. S. (1994).

[2] Turner, M. A., & Zimmerman, W. (1994). Acting for the sake of research: The use of role-playing in evaluation. In J. S. Wholey, H. P. Hatry, & K. E. Newcomer (Eds.), *Handbook of practical program evaluation* (pp. 310-337). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

[3] Under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, each state will: measure the progress of all students toward state-developed standards for what a child should know; the progress of each state, school district, and school will be publicly reported; and state and district reports will show achievement gaps for students who are economically disadvantaged, are from racial or ethnic minority groups, have disabilities, or have limited proficiency in English (U. S. Department of Education. (n.d.) *Introduction: No child left behind.* Retrieved July 18, 2002, from www.nochildleftbehind.gov/next/overview/index.html).

[4] U. S. General Accounting Office. (1999). *Managing for results: Measuring program results that are under limited federal control.* Washington, DC: Author.

Related Resources

Wholey, J. S. (1983). *Evaluation and effective public management.* Boston: Little, Brown.

Wholey, J. S. (1994). Assessing the feasibility and likely usefulness of evaluation. In J. S. Wholey, H. P. Hatry, & K. E. Newcomer (Eds.), *Handbook of practical program evaluation* (pp. 15-39). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

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Moving Ahead on Results Accountability: The Human Element

Sara Watson of the Pew Charitable Trusts explains that a results accountability system must extend beyond the purely technical to also address the management of people.

When *The Evaluation Exchange* published its first newsletters on results accountability in the mid-1990s, federal, state, and local governments were just beginning to introduce these concepts into child and family services. Since then, researchers and practitioners in results accountability have produced a huge amount of information on how to define, measure, and collect the data necessary for accountability systems.

Hundreds of state and local government reports and websites provide extensive guidance on choosing and measuring results, including lists of results and benchmarks, language frameworks, and definitions for all of the varied categories of measures. The various taskforces that are charged with creating a results accountability system have spent years developing their own answers to the questions of what results to seek, what nomenclature to use, what numbers to collect, and how they should be collected. This level of sophistication and variety is important—without the right foundation, results accountability systems will be at the best ineffective and, at the worst, destructive.

Answering the Difficult Questions

But these are only the initial questions that must be addressed in order to use results to actually improve the well-being of children and families over time. *Much* harder are the questions about people, not numbers—about management, not measurement. Once the numbers are in hand, what should be done with them? Who should be accountable for what? How does one unearth the reasons behind a particular performance? What's the best way to decide what follow-up actions will help the numbers improve? What process is both fair to all parties and effective at promoting continuous improvement? What actions will engage workers as partners and encourage them to do their best, instead of making them feel criticized and threatened?

These questions need to be asked, and answered, at the level of individual managers and workers, as well as for federal and state officials and Congressional and state legislative committees. The field needs to apply its considerable intellectual capacity to these questions if results accountability is to become embedded in the fabric of our formal and informal supports for children and families.

An Example of Addressing the Human Element

Missouri's Caring Communities initiative is one of the earliest and best-known community-based results accountability initiatives in the country. Last year the Family and Community Trust (the organization that leads Caring Communities)[1] began a process to design a true shared accountability system, with performance targets and consequences.

One of the most important parts of this system was a formal set of responsibilities for all three of the main partners: the state agencies, the community partnerships, and the Family and Community Trust. While there was a great deal of precedence for its list of performance targets, there was much less written in the field to guide the development of shared responsibilities. One of the most important breakthroughs came when the agency staff said "we are accountable too" and backed that up with specific tasks that they would carry out to support the partnerships' performance on results. Addressing those very human elements, at the same level or more than data concerns, was key to moving ahead with the de-

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[1] As this issue was going to press, the state was disbanding FACT. However, the experience was still important in developing an accountability design accepted by all the partners.

Examples of Ways to Support Improvement

Private reward and pressure – private conversations between those responsible for performing and those who hold them responsible

Public reward and pressure – publicizing performance data and allowing public praise or inviting public inquiry

Tangible rewards for success – money, equipment, etc.

Increased autonomy – more freedom from certain rules or requirements (e.g., administrative paperwork)

Increased assistance – voluntary or mandatory assistance following poor performance

Reduced autonomy/increased oversight – decreased freedom and new or stronger oversight procedures

Reduced or transferred funding – less or no financial support for poor performance (a late-stage option that must be administered in ways that protect vulnerable children and families)

Changing personnel – moving people who were responsible for improvement, but not able to produce it (a last resort option and again administered with care)

Source: Watson, S. (2000). ***Informed consent: Advice for state and local leaders on implementing results-based decisionmaking.*** Washington, DC: The Finance Project. Available at www.financeproject.org/informed_consent.htm.

Helping Nonprofits Strive for High Performance

Amy Coates Madsen describes how, by setting best practices for nonprofits, the Standards for Excellence program both helps nonprofits to improve and increases public confidence in them.

A program director has just been promoted to executive director and wants to learn about how her organization's management and governance practices measure up to best practices within the sector. In the past, there was no easy way for her to benchmark how her organization's practices compared to norms in the nonprofit sector, let alone to know whether such norms existed.

That changed in 1998 when the Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organizations (Maryland Nonprofits) launched the Standards for Excellence program, a comprehensive ethics program that works to strengthen a nonprofit organization's management and leadership, while increasing the public's confidence in the nonprofit sector. The program is now being replicated in nonprofit associations in Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Georgia, Louisiana, and Ohio.

The program includes four components: 1) the Standards for Excellence, 2) nonprofit education about the standards, 3) voluntary certification of organizations meeting the standards, and 4) public education about nonprofit ethics and accountability.

1. The Standards

The Standards for Excellence is a code of conduct that covers eight major topic areas, including:

- Mission and program evaluation
- Governing body
- Conflicts of interest
- Human resources
- Legal and financial issues
- Openness and disclosure
- Fundraising
- Public policy/public affairs

Best practices in nonprofit organizations are outlined and carefully laid out in 55 performance indicators or standards.

Maryland Nonprofits encourages nonprofits to use the Standards for Excellence as a self-assessment checklist for ethical nonprofit operations. Most nonprofits implement about 45 of the 55 standards. Once a nonprofit organization conducts their baseline organizational assessment, the organization is encouraged to devise a plan to implement their remaining unmet standards. Implementing them is a comprehensive process involving both the organization's board and staff.

2. Nonprofit Education

Maryland Nonprofits offers a wide variety of resources to help nonprofits implement the Standards for Excellence. Written educational materials, which include instructional pieces on each best practice, sample policies, procedures, and excerpts from some of the best experts in the fields, have been developed for each area.

Special courses also help introduce the practices and ideals espoused by the Standards of Excellence. One of the association's most popular programs is a four-session clinic series where nonprofit leaders come together to learn about the details of the standards and engage in peer-to-peer exchange, a process to help organizations garner suggestions from their colleagues. In Maryland alone over 400 organizations have taken advantage of training courses to improve their operations.

3. Voluntary Certification

For nonprofits interested in adhering to all 55 performance indicators, Maryland Nonprofits offers a voluntary certification program. To date, 25 organizations have earned the Seal of Excellence for successfully completing this staff-assisted, peer review process.

4. Public Education

The Standards of Excellence public education effort informs the public about characteristics of well-managed, responsibly governed nonprofits. The association works to educate the public through ongoing media outreach, a public service announcement campaign, and by providing packages of easily adaptable promotional material to certified organizations for use with their donors and the public.

The Results

Do these efforts make a difference in strengthening nonprofit performance? A survey of over 350 nonprofit organizations shows that those with access to the services of the Standards for Excellence program have strengthened their governance, management, and organizational practices to a greater degree than organizations without access to the program. In addition, these organizations not only have higher expectations for their performance than the other organizations, but they also outperform them.

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Reflective Assessments: A Tool for Learning

Sharon Edwards and Ira Cutler of Cornerstone Consulting Group explain how organizations can use reflective assessments to assess their progress and consider the choices ahead.

In times like these of diminished resources, most funders expect the organizations they fund to evaluate their programs in some fashion. In some instances, particularly when organizations hope to establish a standard of practice or want to replicate their program, a formal, structured third-party evaluation, with appropriate controls, random selection, careful data collection, and measurement over time is the best method.

Many organizations, however, do not need and cannot afford an extensive third-party evaluation. Instead, their need is for a careful process that will provide them with the opportunity to stop and carefully reflect before moving on to the next stage. The best tool to use in this case is a reflective assessment.

Reflective assessments entail a short and inexpensive process through which organizations can assess their progress, indicate the lessons they have learned, document their accomplishments, and consider the choices ahead. Reflective assessments have been used in a number of ways by a variety of organizations:

- The Ford Foundation's Community Youth Development Initiative and the Pew Charitable Trusts' Neighborhood Preservation Initiative used reflective assessment to produce lessons learned reports, documenting the accomplishments of their initiatives for a broad audience.
- The Annie E. Casey Foundation's Rebuilding Communities Initiative used reflective assessment to give a voice to participants' view of the initiative to supplement the formal reports of external evaluators.
- The Los Angeles Children's Policy Council (LACPC), approaching a 10-year milestone, used a reflective assessment process to build consensus and frame discussions about plans for the next 10 years.

Each reflective assessment is a separately designed project, but generally unfolds in five distinct phases. These phases are outlined below, using Cornerstone Consulting Group's reflective assessment of LACPC as an illustrative example.

Related Resources

The Cornerstone Consulting Group. (2002). *End games: The challenge of sustainability.* Houston, TX: Author. Available at www.cornerstone.to/what/publications.html.

The Cornerstone Consulting Group. (2001). *Communities and youth development: Coming together.* Houston, TX: Author. Available at www.cornerstone.to/what/publications.html.

Phase One – Define the Engagement

In the first and in some ways most important phase, Cornerstone consultants meet with the leadership group to define the engagement: What is the purpose of the assessment? How will the findings of the assessment be used? Who is the audience? The LACPC sought a "lessons learned" report to inform the field, but, after a series of frank discussions, it decided on a different, more internally focused approach. Rather than focusing on exporting ideas, the LACPC decided it needed to take a deep organizational breath and think hard about options and goals for its next 10 years. Had the consultants not taken sufficient time at the front end to define the engagement, they might have produced a report to serve one purpose, but they would have missed the most important mark.

Phase Two – Establish an Information Base

Using readily available information, including annual and progress reports, mission statements, operating manuals, and formal evaluations, Cornerstone establishes an information base. In the case of the LACPC there was no lack of written information and, in fact, the challenge was figuring out what mattered most.

Phase Three – Capture Individual Perspectives

The heart of the reflective assessment process is a series of structured interviews with project leaders, stakeholders, and other constituency groups intended to capture individual perspectives. Cornerstone consultants spoke with 20–25 key informants in Los Angeles County for the LACPC reflective assessment. These interviews offer anonymity and time for personal reflection. Through dialogues with those closest to the effort, Cornerstone develops an analysis of achievements, challenges, the elements stakeholders consider most successful, and areas they see as problematic. The diversity of perspectives provides a voice for all groups involved in the effort. The interviews initiate and set the tone for a process of discovery and exploration and interviewees often say that the interview itself is an enjoyable learning experience.

Phase Four – Prepare an Assessment Report

Cornerstone prepares an assessment report providing an informed view of the initiative's status and direction, and what has been learned during its course. This document is presented for review as a check on accuracy and tone before being finalized for broader distribution. Consultants ask if their picture is accurate, seek to clarify differences, and try to establish common ground. The report developed for the LACPC, *The Tasks Ahead*, raised questions that resonated with many CPC (Children's Policy Council) members and created a "buzz" that focused attention on important issues.

Phase Five – Present the Report

On the basis of feedback and discussions, Cornerstone finalizes the report and often makes a presentation in a formal setting,

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Risk

John Bare of the Knight Foundation shares his foundation's definition of the term "risk" when it comes to investing in initiatives, borrowing from the language of money managers.

I'm a little nutty when it comes to risk. I go looking for fried chicken, which increases my chances of heart disease, but alter my path to avoid walking over city sidewalk grates. I'm scared of being the million-to-one rube pulled from the sewer.

At least I've thought it through. In philanthropy, we frequently use the term "risk" without explaining what we mean.

At the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation in Miami, where I work as director of program development and evaluation, the strategic plan that trustees adopted in 2000 says the 26 U.S. communities where we make grants "will be considered laboratories, where high-risk and experimental ventures are tested and approaches that have been demonstrated to work are implemented and nurtured."

Our staff loved the language, but it put us on the spot. We needed a common understanding of "risk." We got help from evaluator Michael Quinn Patton who encouraged us to borrow concepts from money managers. 'Some grants are sort of like long-term bonds, some are blue chip stocks, and so on. From that, we developed ways to describe risk and manage it across a portfolio of grants.

Up front, we work with nonprofit partners to agree on a grant's anticipated outcome. In financial terms, this is the ROI—return on investment. In recent years we added this explanation to the grant summaries we write for our board. This sharpens the grant development arguments. Are we assuming risk to produce effects that benefit individuals directly? Or to help communities learn something? Or both?

Caroming through trial-and-error innovation may not be the surest way to provide immediate benefits to individuals, but the promise of knowledge that benefits communities is a counterweight.

"We've learned that invention requires failing, starting over, learning from the mistakes, trying again," our annual report

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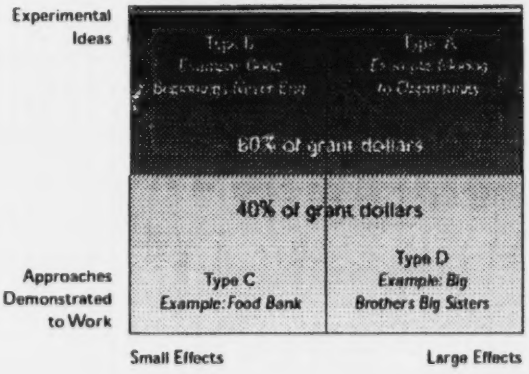
Hypothetical Risk Tolerances

The chart depicts tolerances for "idea risk" by a hypothetical foundation interested in investing 40% of its resources in relatively safe approaches and 60% in experimental ideas. Grant investments fit along three dimensions: 1) the magnitude of the intended benefits (horizontal axis), 2) the degree of risk associated with the idea (vertical axis), and 3) the potential for gaining new insight into effective practice (light-to-dark shading).

Experimental Ideas Evaluation is a priority. Assessing process and program outcomes is critical to learning what worked, what didn't, and why.

Type A: Relatively high risks are offset by the potential for large benefits. Requires long-term investments. *Example: Moving to Opportunity – a national experiment using housing vouchers to help poor families secure homes in safer neighborhoods.*

Type B: Investments dip a toe into uncharted waters. The investment and the expectations for effects are small. Incremental gains may build toward something larger. *Example: Good Beginnings Never End – a door-to-door training service in Long Beach, California that lends a hand to adults who run child-care programs in their homes.*



Approaches Demonstrated to Work Evaluation of these programs monitor implementation and the community conditions in which practitioners are working.

Type C: Short-term investments where the benefits are small, but relatively certain. Are critical for sustaining momentum in communities. Benefits are often highly visible. *Examples: Food banks and coats-for-kids programs.*

Type D: Have strong track record of producing relatively large effects. Require long-term investments. *Example: Big Brothers Big Sisters program.*

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A conversation with
Paul Light

Paul Light is a Senior Fellow of Governance Studies, Director of the Center for Public Service, and a Senior Adviser to the Presidential Appointee Initiative at the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C. He is also an instructor at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Previously he was Director of the Public Policy Program at the Pew Charitable Trusts. He has written 14 books, including most recently *Pathways to Nonprofit Excellence*.[1] Light received his Ph.D. from the University of Michigan.

Q Your new book, *Pathways to Nonprofit Excellence*, asserts that continuous improvement is at the core of what it means to be a high-performing organization. How can evaluation help nonprofits to be high performers?

A There are three questions that all organizations must address, whether they're nonprofit, private, or governmental:

1. Why do they exist?
2. Whom do they serve?
3. How will they know they are successful?

I believe that rigorous measurement should be at the center of a nonprofit's mission. If you don't have some sort of measurement system for tracking activities, outputs, and hopefully outcomes, you're not going to know if you are on the right track. Every nonprofit that I've come to admire over the years has started with a commitment to rigorous measurement as part of their core ethic. When I ask how they will know if they are successful, they are able to articulate clearly the outcomes and measures they use to assure they are headed down the right path.

A commitment to careful measurement and evaluation is essential to innovation. Most innovation does not involve "mad-scientist thinking." Innovating organizations correct themselves over time and fine tune their programs through careful evaluation.

Also, a commitment to careful measurement and evaluation is essential to the task of innovation. Most innovation does not involve "mad-scientist thinking." Innovating organizations correct themselves over time and fine tune their programs through careful evaluation. They have an extraordinary commitment to measurement because they know that: a) if they are going to challenge prevailing wisdom through innovation, they better be prepared for the prevailing wisdom to push back and challenge them to prove that their new ideas work, and b) their new ideas are not going to work unless they commit themselves to trial and error, which is guided by careful evaluation.

Q How is the "outcomes movement" affecting the performance of nonprofits?

A I think the outcomes movement, with its focus on measuring real outcomes rather than activities or short-term outputs, is very favorable, as long as it is not focused only on "compliance." I think the best outcomes measurement is developed by the nonprofit sector in collaboration with the party requesting it, rather than imposed from the outside.

Also, outcomes measurement should not be another paperwork exercise that doesn't matter in any tangible way to the allocation of dollars and resources. For the last 10 years outcomes have been pushed very hard at the federal level with, I think, mixed results because in some cases it has not really mattered for the things that federal agencies pay attention to—budget, personnel, financial rewards for personnel, etc.

We interviewed federal employees over the last six months about morale. One federal employee talked at length about how his agency has done such a good job at producing strategic plans and developing very detailed metrics for assessing impacts, and that all that has occurred is that Congress has more ammunition with which to pummel away at his agency. The reality is that you can have very high performance and not get a budget increase, and you can have very poor performance and get a significant budget increase.

The outcomes movement is going to have the same results in the nonprofit sector if it is not intimately tied to things that matter to nonprofits—meaning dollars for programmatic activity—and if it is not done fairly.

Q Can you give examples of federal agencies that have used outcomes in a meaningful way?

A The Department of Transportation (DOT) is considered the best-run federal department in terms of outcome measurement. The Federal Highway Administration (FHA) within DOT in particular has set very broad strategic goals for itself that deal with things like reducing highway fatalities. That's a very difficult outcome to control, but the FHA has embraced it and said, "If we are going to do our job, we're going to reduce highway fatalities, and we are going to do that by increasing the use of seatbelts, getting better at enforcing speed limits, etc."

[1] Light, P. C. (2002). *Pathways to nonprofit excellence*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

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DOT is setting a very high mark in saying, "You've got to take responsibility for some outcomes that may be just beyond your reach." Traditionally, the agency would say the number of interstate highway deaths is not something they could control. But DOT felt their rules on seatbelt use, crash survivability, airbags, etc., were designed to make accidents more survivable and so they should hold themselves accountable for that. This approach can really energize an agency and a workforce. Every day that FHA staff go into work they should be thinking, "We are about saving lives in this agency."

Q Many nonprofits feel they do not have the time, staff, and other resources for evaluation. What would you say in response?

A I understand the pressures that nonprofits face, especially small ones for whom the choice to evaluate may mean cutting back on desperately needed staff or technology. But I think evaluation is a wise investment. I'd say to small, struggling nonprofits, "If you're coming to work every day because of the mission, you need to have some understanding of whether you're actually making headway. And that's got to be more than hunch and intuition."

Funders can help by not cutting their evaluation and capacity-building budgets in times of retrenchment. Capacity building and evaluation are usually the first things to go. Foundations say what their grantees say, "If we have to make a choice between evaluation or capacity building and saving trees, for example, we're going to focus on saving trees." I think that could be, even though it's not a proven fact, a terrible investment decision.

It denies the possibility that investments in evaluation and capacity more generally can improve productivity and increase efficiencies in ways that will stretch those dollars much further than they would otherwise go. It could be that during periods of retrenchment, the most important investment foundations can make is in organizational capacity building, precisely because that's what many organizations cut first.

There was a survey of California nonprofits last fall in the wake of September 11. Most nonprofits contacted were already starting to cut back on staffing, MIS investments, pay raises, bonuses, and new benefits programs. I spent some time in California over the last two months and you can see the effects of those cutbacks. Organizations became more stressful places to work, started to burn out their employees, and saw higher turnover. That can't be good for saving trees in any respect.

Q How should capacity-building efforts be evaluated?

A We are working very hard on that question right now. The traditional view has been to evaluate capacity building in terms of its outputs. It's relatively easy to look at capacity building on fundraising, for example, and measure the number of letters that went out, the number of successful contacts, and the amount of money brought in. Periods of retrenchment that focus on outputs alone almost encourage funders to reduce their capacity-building support because it's something that they believe can be delayed.

The real challenge in evaluating capacity building is to demonstrate its impact on actual programmatic outcomes. It's very difficult to do. The evaluation community has not been very effective at designing evaluations that ask how capacity building improves the efficiency or productivity of an organization in actually doing things like saving trees, educating children, feeding the hungry, supporting HIV/AIDS patients, and so forth.

We need to know, "What are the linking mechanisms that come out of capacity-building efforts that produce more trees saved?" For example, in theory, an MIS should increase productivity, and productivity is a linking mechanism that should increase programmatic impact. Efficiency, strategic alliances, morale, and job satisfaction are other linking mechanisms. Even though this makes intuitive sense, we haven't done a good job of proving it.

Paul Light

Q What is currently missing in evaluations of the nonprofit sector? What might be future directions?

A I think evaluators generally neglect organizational variables as possible causes of programmatic failure. Program evaluators tend to look at program design as the most important factor in whether a program succeeds or fails. Evaluations should also look at staff training, organizational configuration, access to technology, and everything from supplies to strategic planning.

We've got a bunch of evaluators who do *program evaluation*; we've got a very small number of evaluators who do *capacity-building evaluation*. I'd like to see more interaction between the two, because I suspect their interaction could result in some methodology to figure out how to attribute program failure and success to program design and organizational capacity.

Also, a barrier to evaluation is that many organizations think it's a very costly enterprise that's going to take a long time. And we all know better. But perhaps the evaluation community can come up with a different, deeper set of products that can help organizations at different points in their lifecycle, and help organizations with varying amounts of money. This is not to be a substitute for full-blown, empirically anchored evaluation, but is to get organizations to think about measurement more effectively. Evaluators need to think about different levels of evaluation and ways to get organizations to think of evaluation as something that's a constant benefit rather than an eventual trial.

Julia Coffman, Consultant, HFRP
M. Elena Lopez, Senior Consultant, HFRP

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Participatory Evaluation for Continuous Improvement

Kim Sabo of Sabo Consulting and Dana Fusco from York College, CUNY illustrate how they conducted a participatory evaluation of an after school literacy initiative to support its continuous improvement.

In 1998, we were commissioned to evaluate a collaborative of 10 community-based after school programs in New York City that had just instituted a literacy initiative. Since the programs were small and were interested in continuous improvement, we thought a participatory evaluation (PE) would be the best method to use.

Working with the collaborative's literacy coordinator, the initial step was to create a logic model of the entire literacy initiative. We quickly learned that there were many different understandings and practices of literacy across the 10 after school programs. If PE was going to offer programs the opportunity for continuous improvement, then we had to create strategies to evaluate the initiative while staying true to the uniqueness of each program within the initiative.

One strategy was a Literacy Program Model (LPM). The LPM allowed each program to identify three of their "best" literacy practices and then position them in relation to the program's objective(s), resources, and assessment tools. In developing the LPM, staff began to recognize the areas within the program that could be strengthened, i.e., which objectives were not being met. Staff defined a Plan of Action that specified next steps with regard to adding or changing literacy activities, acquiring additional resources, and developing documentation and assessment strategies. In this way programs used the LPM to guide continuous improvement of program planning.

The extent to which the Plan of Action was implemented became a central focus of both individual program evaluations and the evaluation of the overall initiative. Next we needed methods to document the progress of the programs and the initiative.

Two User-Friendly Data Collection Tools

Throughout the PE process, two data collection tools were especially helpful: the House Matrix and the House Portfolio.

The House Matrix is a program overview organized according to seven areas of potential change: philosophy/mission, staff development, facilities, literacy practice, assessment, parent involvement, and school/community collaborations. Each matrix includes specific program information (mission statement, number of staff workshops, child-staff ratio, academic and enrichment activities, assessment procedures, number of parent meetings and use of parent advisories, and school and community partnerships). Data for the house matrices are gathered, reviewed, and revised in collaboration with staff. This organizational tool provides a contextualized snapshot of each program that helps both evaluators and staff members understand their program better.

The House Portfolio expands on the information represented in the House Matrix, with the seven areas of change sectioned off in a three-ring binder. All staff collect data for the portfolio and periodically come together to reflect on the findings. The portfolios help individual programs, the literacy coordinator, and the evaluation team understand their progress and accomplishments over the course of a year. In addition, the portfolios become a communication tool, allowing staff to share the program's overall work and development with funders, parents, students, and other stakeholders.

The Results

By the end of the evaluation, all programs were able to collect data and were beginning to understand the usefulness of evaluation and reflection. Even when programs valued the long-term gains of PE, high turnover rates often made the directors wary of investing in further staff development. Thus, it is unclear whether we could have fully built evaluation capacity within each of the programs. What we were able to do was address each of our evaluation questions while simultaneously supporting programs to gain a better understanding of the relationship between program planning and evaluation.

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Participatory Evaluation

As an approach to organizational and program assessment, participatory evaluation (PE) involves a collaboration between evaluator and client. Participatory evaluation:

- Increases the likelihood that evaluation results are accurate and relevant
- Ensures that program staff will be motivated and prepared to use evaluation findings
- Builds the program's capacity to continue to design and conduct quality evaluations with diminished reliance on outside assistance
- Stimulates deep thinking about programmatic issues, often leading to refinement in the program itself
- Gives staff new tools for communicating their program to others

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ProDES:
A Continuous Improvement System for Juvenile Justice

Philip Harris and Lori Grubstein of the Crime and Justice Research Center describe the "bottom-up" development of ProDES, an outcome-based information system that tracks youth in the juvenile justice system.

ProDES (the Program Development and Evaluation System) is an information system that tracks every court-committed Philadelphia delinquent in the juvenile justice system and measures program outcomes. It is designed to support both the simultaneous continuous improvement of individual programs and the larger system of services to which each program is linked.[1] ProDES provides programs and the system as a whole with a continuous flow of intermediate (changes during the program) and ultimate (recidivism and community adjustment[2]) outcome information. This information is then used for program development, matching youths to programs, and assessment of the program resources available to system-level administrators.

[1] ProDES was developed as a joint venture between the city's Department of Human Services (DHS), Family Court, and the Crime and Justice Research Center.

[2] "Recidivism," which generally means "re-offending," is defined for use in ProDES as a petition to Family Court for a new offense. By "community adjustment" we mean that the youth is attending school regularly or is employed, is getting along well with family members, is not abusing drugs or alcohol, and has not been involved in new delinquent behavior.

The system comprises data collection, analysis, and feedback. ProDES provides four types of information that allow program administrators to make informed changes to program designs, and allow system administrators to assess the value of different programs for different categories of youths and to identify the need for new or expanded program resources. The information consists of:

- Case-specific reports at intake, discharge, and follow-up
- Semi-annual, program-specific reports summarizing aggregated outcome data
- Annual, system-wide reports that describe trends for the entire system
- Topical reports that explore policy issues such as "the female delinquent" and "substance-abusing delinquents"

With this information, programs can study the reasons why some youths leave programs early, explore changes in their incoming client population over time, examine client change on dimensions relevant to future behavior, and develop testable theories on the impact of program improvements.

A Focus on Utilization and Continuous Improvement

We began developing ProDES with a clear bias—that whatever kind of system we created, the information had to be useful to

Goals and Intended Utilization of ProDES

Goal	*Information*	*Intended User Groups*	*Intended Use*
Program Development To facilitate program development through the use of continuous outcome information	• Trends in intake population characteristics • Trends in specific program outcomes • Comparisons to similar programs serving similar clients • Predictive analyses of program outcomes	• Program administrators	• Revision of target population characteristics • Better screening of referrals • Program design modification • Marketing
System Planning To facilitate planning of services through information about program strengths and weaknesses	• Trends in program outcomes • Trends in intake population • Comparisons of similar programs with similar clients • Cost benefit analysis	• Court and Community Services Planning Group – reviews and renews contracts annually • Human Services Monitors – monitor programs regarding compliance with regulations	• Renewal of contracts • Development of requests for proposals • Program accountability for improving poor outcomes • Adjustment of per diem payments
Client Matching To facilitate rational matching of youths to programs	• Program outcomes subdivided by risk of recidivism and case type • Detailed information on program design and structure	• Probation officers • Special Needs Unit Staff • Judges	• Consideration of predictions of outcomes when making program recommendations and decisions

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stakeholders for purposes of program and system development. At the same time, we recognized that the information would eventually be used to hold programs accountable for their outcomes. We also recognized the risks inherent in building a data collection system across nearly 100 programs, most of which are operated by private agencies. We could not depend on coercion to build the system; it had to appeal to its user groups.

In planning ProDES, the developmental process had to be "bottom-up" with the private agencies having direct input to both the structure and content of the system. Accordingly, the first phase of the system involved research with 15 agencies that were selected to represent a broad range of programs. Within each program, we conducted evaluability assessments that sought to articulate the goals and objectives of the various programs, their measures of success or failure, and the range of information they routinely collect and use.

The first phase demonstrated that agencies commonly agree on what type of information is important for their programs and the system as a whole. They also agreed about the ideal structure of an information system—one which went beyond simply describing program clients at one point in time and included multiple measures to demonstrate change over time.

Once we identified our key outcome dimensions, we devoted several months to testing standardized scales that would be used to measure change on these key variables. The 15 programs supported the effort by testing the measures on their clients and providing feedback. These same programs served as the core of ProDES when it went into full operation.

A significant part of our job involves facilitated discussions about utilization, helping users develop their own research questions and supporting their use of the results of our analyses. In our utilization design (see box on page 13), each major decision is linked to the appropriate decision maker and to the information that best supports that decision.

Through surveys and an independent evaluation we know that stakeholders' use of ProDES has grown over time. Programs use ProDES to:

- Refine their target population characteristics or screening criteria
- Modify their designs and document their need for additional resources
- Better market their services to the larger system
- Help new managers better understand their strengths and weaknesses

The services system uses ProDES to:

- Review program contracts
- Explore problems with specific programs
- Answer policy-relevant questions (e.g., Why are so many first time offenders being sent to residential facilities? Why are some youths not receiving aftercare services?)
- Plan for future resource demands

The Court and the Probation Department use ProDES to:

- Learn about trends in the delinquent population
- Improve their matching of youths to programs
- Track program use
- Develop plans for future resource needs

Utilization of data proceeded most rapidly among programs, although about three years passed before the use of ProDES data became institutionalized. This adaptation has been facilitated by changes in human services, where there is a growing respect for program evaluation, but working to make evaluation a collaborative venture clearly made a difference.

Developing consistent use in the Court has been more challenging. We developed a working group of Probation Department staff that meets monthly, began conducting training sessions within the department and with the judges, and secured separate funding to work with the Court to develop a tool that will assist judges in matching youths to programs. Support for ProDES is growing steadily as the Court has begun to view its data and staff as supports for developing meaningful goals.

Conclusion

Building an outcome-based information system for an entire juvenile justice system has been, and continues to be, a challenge, even after eight years of operation. We have learned that the strategy of setting program development as our primary goal has worked well. It is a goal that makes sense to all system stakeholders and that enabled us to build working relationships with our primary sources of data and the most critical user group.

We have also learned that face-to-face interactions with users about their outcome data have helped to build the trusting and productive relationships that are necessary to guarantee data utilization. Moreover, these relationships have empowered users to collaborate in our research process, often raising valuable research questions which we can respond to quickly.

Lastly, we have learned the value of both training and effective communication. In order to increase the capacities of users to consume research information we need to make it accessible. This means continually improving our presentations of information as well as training users to become smart consumers of research.

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Evaluating Citizen Schools

Charlie Schlegel of Citizen Schools explains how their evaluation strategy successfully balances the need to determine program impact with the need for continuous improvement.

Founded in 1995, Citizen Schools operates after school programs in 16 public schools, including 12 in Boston and 4 affiliated sites nationally. Each week, almost 1,000 middle school students—most from low-income households—participate in up to 16 hours of engaging, hands-on learning activities to improve their skills in writing and data analysis as well as their leadership and civic interest. Students also participate in "apprenticeships" taught by adult volunteers, who share their expertise and professionalism through 10-week projects, culminating in a final product or performance.

Citizen Schools Evaluation

Evaluation plays two important roles in the success of our program. First, regular and rigorous assessments of the program quality and impact offer us, as well as policymakers, objective measures of its effect on student achievement and "life trajectory." Second, using the balanced scorecard and other approaches, evaluation generates the performance data and constituent feedback necessary for continuous improvement.

Evaluation at Citizen Schools translates our broadly-stated mission—"to educate kids and strengthen communities"—into four outcome areas: community, leadership, access, and skills (CLAS). Each aspect of the program—the writing and data projects, volunteer-led apprenticeships, homework assistance, and community explorations—are intended to improve students' lives in one or more of the outcome areas. We use four evaluation approaches to assess program impact and analyze data for continuous improvement.

Approach One – Skill Assessments

Citizen Schools assesses students' writing, data, and oral skills at the beginning and end of each school year. Our staff uses this information to identify the specific skill areas in which students need the most help and where they improve over the school year. We use the results and analysis of each skills assessment to make changes in the way our different sites allot time and staff resources towards each skill area and to adjust the curriculum and structure of our skill-based projects.

Approach Two – Constituent Surveys

Midway through each school year and at the close of the program Citizen Schools asks students, parents, volunteers, school teachers, and staff for feedback through its constituent surveys. The surveys ask about constituents' experience in the program, their assessments of its impact, and suggestions for improvement. We analyze constituent feedback, looking for trends and specific responses that may lead to improvement in the quality of the program and its measures of impact. Over time survey feedback has resulted in programmatic changes, such as additional supports for adult volunteers and different marketing strategies for different constituents.

Approach Three – The Balanced Scorecard

> The balanced scorecard is a management system that enables organizations to clarify their vision and strategy and translate them into action. It provides feedback around both internal program processes and external outcomes in order to continuously improve strategic performance and results. (The Balanced Scorecard Institute)

Citizen Schools uses a balanced scorecard to monitor our performance in all areas. Our balanced scorecard includes several program objectives, as well as fundraising, staff management, and national and state policy objectives. We report our progress on each of the balanced scorecard measures to our Board of Directors, staff, and key stakeholders quarterly. Each year the leadership of Citizen Schools establishes the specific objectives and measures of the balanced scorecard for that year based on feedback from staff and other stakeholders within the organization. Staff members collect data for the scorecard and track progress on objectives specific to their departments.

Over time Citizen Schools has found the balanced scorecard to be an effective organizational lever, helping to draw managerial attention and resources to under-resourced initiatives and priorities. For instance, our 2002 balanced scorecard includes "measures" to develop plans for regularly collecting student academic data and to design baseline measures to assess the program's impact on adult volunteers. In short, the balanced scorecard helps keep the scarce resources of the organization focused on the essentials of running high-quality after school programs.

Approach Four – The Impact Study

The Impact Study is a longitudinal, quasi-experimental evaluation conducted by Policy Studies Associates (PSA), an evaluation firm headquartered in Washington D.C. Begun in the fall of 2001, this evaluation uses several methods of data collection and analysis to addresses questions of program implementation, outcomes, and impact on students' school performance and social maturity. This externally-driven evaluation helps us collect the

continued on page 18

Related Resources

The Balanced Scorecard Institute: www.balancedscorecard.org.

Pane, N., Mulligan, I., Ginsburg, A., & Lauland, A. (1999, February). *A guide to Continuous Improvement Management (CIM) for 21st Century Community Learning Centers*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Available at www.ed.gov/offices/OUS/PES/21cent/cim226.pdf (Acrobat file).

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Advice From the Experts on Nurturing Strong Full Service Schools

The following are excerpts from an evaluation panel at the conference, "Nurturing Strong Full Service Schools: Building Bridges with Communities," that took place on May 20, 2002. It was the fifth in a series of national conferences about full service schools organized by Margot Welch and the Collaborative for Integrated School Services at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Panelists shared their evaluation findings and lessons learned.

Joy Dryfoos, Moderator
Writer and Researcher, New York, New York
The Collaborative has invited four of the country's leading researchers, each of whom is looking intensively at different components of community schools, particularly after school programs and family resource centers. They have been asked to comment on the state of the art in school-community-partnership programs and address the questions, "What works and what doesn't? How can practitioners approach evaluating their own programs?"

Robert J. Illback, Executive Director
R.E.A.C.H., Louisville, Kentucky
In evaluating the Kentucky Family and Youth Service Centers, we learned the importance of getting people to focus on self-evaluation and program improvement, as opposed to merely gathering data for self-justification or accountability purposes. One of the challenges evaluators face is that in the process of "selling" the initial program concept, large and hard-to-measure goals are often specified to show the importance of the intervention. When program people feel pressure to quickly "prove" that the program works ("because the government is spending all this money"), this can lead to an unrealistic and infeasible evaluation strategy. The net result can be a focus on measures no one thinks are sensitive to what the program is actually doing, with the potential to grossly misrepresent the program's effectiveness. In some ways, you can set yourself up for failure.

Nonetheless, it is important at the outset to consider the information policymakers consider important, because evaluators have a responsibility to funders to report whether the program is moving in the intended direction. But it is also important to stave off the summative questions for as long as possible. Oftentimes we sell programs based on big concepts like, "we want all children to learn at high levels" or "we're going to improve family life or transform communities." Even if we were to accomplish these things, we couldn't prove it had anything to do with the program.

As evaluators, our challenge is to focus program planners on evaluating more proximal outcomes. So, rather than talk about those big issues, let's reframe our focus to consider what we expect will happen in the classroom when a child comes to school, and how we will know whether change has occurred, and how we can measure that reliably.

My tips for designing your evaluation are:

- Invest upfront in understanding the logic of your program. A successful evaluation needs consensus at the beginning about what you're trying to accomplish. Through logic modeling, you can arrive at consensus among various stakeholders.
- Be aware of the political context and what the issues are. Programs are changing and evolving, the climate is always shifting, and legislators and administrators come and go. Recognize that there needs to be a core consensus about what information is being sought from the evaluation—this can change over time.
- Be realistic. Many researchers and psychologists are enamored with the idea that we can have controlled experiments. In community-school partnership evaluations, you need to drop these pretenses. The evaluation is about helping people gather data so that they can achieve understanding.
- Manage information wisely. It's not about the right software program—it's about conceptualizing the information at the outset.
- Have clear questions. We have lots of questions, but we need to hammer down what's doable.
- Look at proximal, not distant, outcomes.
- Keep your eyes on the prize. You have a limited amount of evaluation capital to spend so focus on core questions.

Jean Baldwin Grossman
Private/Public Ventures, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Public/Private Ventures and the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation have just completed an evaluation of the extended service school initiative that began in 1997. Twenty communities that participated in this initiative adopted one of four nationally recognized extended school models: Beacon Schools, Bridge to Success, Community Schools, or West Philadelphia Improvement Corporation.

We found that these after school programs can be put in place quickly and matured over the three years. The programs became much better at figuring out what their core goals were and how to develop activities to meet them. They got better at strategically including children and also became an accepted partner in the schools by the second year.

The after school programs provided developmental supports for children and youth. What mattered for the strength and quality of the program was not the topic or activity or the skill taught; what mattered was the ability of staff to engage and stretch the children.

It takes three or four semesters of participation before you see program effects, especially the academic ones. Staff had to make continuous efforts to attract and hold onto older children, starting with those in the fourth and fifth grades. The choices that programs make affect who shows up. Older children and youth need their own activities that they are interested in.

Children and youth who participated in these programs were likely to show improved school attitudes and behaviors and to stay out of trouble. Children were more likely to handle anger appropriately, to pay attention in class, and to be proud of school. They were also less likely to start skipping school and to start to drink alcohol. However, we cannot know with all certainty whether these effects were due to the program or whether the children who were better behaved and better academically were the ones participating in the first place.

Mark Dynarski, Senior Researcher
Mathematica Policy Research Institute, Princeton, New Jersey
When full-service school programs are funded by short-term grants, an evaluation's results can be fed back to the community for support. The school district is listening to its customers, which are the parents. Community organizations have local boards and are listening to residents. These parents and community groups are the ultimate client who can push for the stability of grant-funded programs. If you don't have a basis for support among the ultimate client, then programs will be short-lived.

The risks in evaluation are that you might not show improvement early on. Then you risk having your client base eroded, or you will be asked to show improvement too early and the same thing will happen. My advice is not to overstate the potential gains of the partnership in the work plan. Statements of possible outcomes might sound tremendous.

For example, one health program set a goal of 50% decrease of the infant mortality rate. The only time you see this impact is in developing countries where the water system is so bad that any improved water system reduces diarrhea and other diseases and contributes to dramatic decreases in infant mortality. This is not the case in the U.S. The health program did not meet its goal; it was too large an outcome to go after.

Set realistic and sensible goals, and acknowledge that impacts will be incremental. Don't strive to see the highest thing you've seen in the research. Think about outcomes to be average rather than the extreme.

Heather Weiss, Director
Harvard Family Research Project, Cambridge, Massachusetts
We need to move away from a model where we do an evaluation and if it works and shows success we use it with our funders and if it doesn't we put in a drawer and hope that nobody asks for it. We need to move from evaluation as a one-time effort to evaluation as a continuous learning process. Programs that get ahead of the game will get and use data in an ongoing way to show that they are delivering value to their community over time.

Evaluators and practitioners need to think in terms of continuous improvement and building a *learning system* for the field of full service schools. Our next steps should focus on framing the full service school research and evaluation agenda to be pursued individually and collectively. Evaluators and other stakeholders have to tap and deliver on what people want to know. As we answer questions, new ones open up for inquiry; as we accumulate knowledge, we begin to connect the information to deepen our understanding, and also to identify the gaps that need to be investigated in future research and evaluation. For example, we have to better understand and demonstrate the direct or indirect relationship between after school programs or support services for children and families and educational outcomes.

As part of the learning system, it is important to build a knowledge base that community and school programs can get access to and contribute to. There have been very limited investments in evaluation and knowledge development, and even more limited investments for getting evaluations broadly disseminated so that people can get their hands on them and discuss their implications.

In addition, there's a growing demand for evaluator-practitioner forums that promote cross-sector dialogue and learning. The time has come for funders to invest in virtual and in-person meetings where evaluators talk with practitioners about the evaluation findings and their implications for the continuous improvement of programs and for learning and field building.

This is what it means to build a learning system for a field. I encourage the dialogue to continue about what this system should look like for the field of full service schools.

Past articles on school-linked services can be found in The Evaluation Exchange *Vol. III, No. 2, 1997. Archived issues are available at www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/eval/archives.html.*

Related Resources

Kalafat, J., & Illback, R. J. (1999, December). *Evaluation of Kentucky's School-Based Family Resource and Youth Services Center, part I: Program design, evaluation conceptualization, and implementation evaluation.* Louisville, KY: R.E.A.C.H. of Louisville, Inc. Available at www.reachoflouisville.com/Evaluation%20of%20Family%20Resource%201.htm.

Harvard Family Research Project's Out-of-School Time Evaluation Database. Available at www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/afterschool/evaldatabase.html.

Grossman, J. B., et al. (2002, June). *Multiple choices after school: Findings from the Extended-Service Schools Initiative.* Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures. Available at www.ppv.org/indexfiles/pubsindex.html.

University of Minnesota, College of Education and Human Development, Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement. *Use of continuous improvement and evaluation in before- and after-school programs: Final report.* (2001). Minneapolis, MN: Author. Available at education.umn.edu/CAREI/Programs/mott/default.html.

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Risk
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says, pointing to the example of Thomas Edison discovering thousands of ways *not* to invent the incandescent electric lightbulb.

In explaining how we assess risk, I start with a simple example. Let's say the desired outcome is for me to lose 20 pounds. Three types of risk come into play.

There's *idea risk*. This represents the risk associated with the idea's track record and the logic connecting the activities to the desired result. I found my favorite example of idea risk in *The New York Times* in summer 2001. Thieves stole art from a Jewish museum in New York and pledged to hold the objects until there was peace in the Middle East. Talk about your poorly formed theory of change. It's just the opposite with my weight-loss example. For me, a low-fat diet with regular aerobic exercise carries almost no idea risk.

That brings us to *implementation risk*. Bad ideas can be well-implemented and vice versa. My diet-and-exercise solution fails because of botched implementation—I haven't been able to stick with the regimen. In philanthropic terms, I wouldn't give me a grant.

Untangling idea risk and implementation risk helps our staff integrate evaluation into grant development. When do we need more conceptual work? When do we need technical assistance to ensure effective execution?

Then there's *evidence risk*. In my weight-loss example, there's almost no evidence risk. Not only will the evidence be unambiguous evidence, it's quite depressing.

But with most grants, evidence is dicey. It's hard to agree on evidence standards. Then detecting effects is inexact. We risk not knowing one way or the other. Deciding when it's important to diminish evidence risk helps with front-end evaluation planning. These discussions also help us reach consensus on investments that merit scarce evaluation dollars.

We've got a growing list of factors that can affect all three types of risk, and we have added a section on risk in the grant summaries we write for our board (see box).

With this prospective analysis, we don't pretend to predict the future. We need a clear account of our original expectations to honestly compare purported risks against hazards actually encountered.

We are currently working with trustees to set tolerances for idea risk. We want agreement on how much we're willing to invest in approaches that that tilt toward the tried-and-true versus experimental approaches that ensure higher rates of failure, but promise greater learning opportunities.

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Risk Factors

Below are factors that can affect how risky an investment an initiative is for a funder. In grant development, it's best to focus on the factors that need to be addressed to increase the likelihood of success for the investment.

- Environmental turbulence
- Needs of target population
- Time horizon
- Implementer's history
- Size of the investment
- Clarity of logic model
- Sustainability
- Degree of controversy
- Complexity
- Leadership
- Novelty of the idea
- Nature of capacity needed
- Visibility of the effort
- Partners' relationships
- Number/nature of foundation investors
- Degree of consensus on the local advisory committee
- Degree of politicization
- Potential for negative side effects
- Rifle-shot approach vs. natural variation (i.e., are alternatives funded?)
- Depth of knowledge base
- Hidden assumptions

Evaluating Citizen Schools
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necessary outcomes data so our staff can focus on collecting data for continuous improvement.

The relationship between internal efforts to use data for continuous improvement and externally-generated data for proving impact is complementary. Citizen Schools and PSA both collect data about students' school performance and social maturity—data that we use to measure the impact of our program as well as inform our decisions about quality improvements in our services.

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Increase Equity
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feedback on performance, public recognition, meetings with policymakers and senior managers, and increases in flexibility. Financial incentives may include bonuses, increases in budget levels, and award or renewal of discretionary grants and contracts.

Efforts to enhance equity may draw inspiration from the success of others. For example, the Veteran's Health Administration and the U.S. Department of Transportation have used performance agreements to focus executives' attention on agency performance goals.[5] The County Board of Arlington, Virginia, used frequent public reporting and meetings with the County Manager to stimulate the hiring of minorities and women. At national, state, and local levels, enforcement of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 has changed the incentive systems of elected officials and helped create greater equity in public services.

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[5] U. S. General Accounting Office. (2000). *Managing for results: Emerging benefits of selected agencies' use of performance agreements.* Washington, DC: Author.

Reflective Assessments
continued from page 8

such as an extended meeting or retreat, in which participants can reflect and react to the report. This meeting, and subsequent discussions, allow participants to focus on their core concerns: Are we on the right track? How do others view our effort? Are we encountering barriers that we didn't anticipate? Should we make any changes in our approach? The assessment report does not sit on a shelf; rather it becomes a critical tool for charting the next steps.

While not the right tool for all efforts, at all times, reflective assessments fill an important niche in the evaluation landscape. A particularly important attribute has been the *responsiveness* of the process; a reflective assessment takes weeks, not years, to produce usable information.

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Results Accountability
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sign. It is that kind of "lesson learned" that may be helpful to other states and that needs to be explored and documented.

Assuming Accountability and Supporting Improvement

One of the biggest problems that a formal accountability system can have is a process that moves directly from collecting the numbers to follow-up actions, without sufficient intervening analysis about why a certain level of performance happened and what the next steps should be. Poor performance might be the result of:

- The wrong strategy
- The right strategy, poorly implemented or inadequately funded
- Another partner failing to fulfill its responsibility
- Some outside factor (e.g., the economy, or a population with more challenges than anticipated)

Knowing which reason is the correct one is essential to deciding on next steps. The box on page 6 lists possible follow-up actions—both "carrots" and "sticks"—for different levels of performance. They are based on choices states and localities are currently using, and can be applied at the individual and organizational levels.

It is immensely challenging to decide on and implement follow-up actions that address the correct problem, hold people responsible for the appropriate level of performance (e.g., don't penalize individuals for performance on results that are much broader than they can hope to affect and vice-versa), increase trust, improve performance, and satisfy the public and the media that progress is being made. Making the right decisions about who should be accountable to whom for what is crucial. Mistakes here can doom accountability systems by raising fears and resistance among those who are responsible for improvements.

Most accountability systems are just beginning to complete the cycle of collecting data, analyzing the reasons behind performance, and taking action to improve. Just as experts and practitioners have produced hundreds of reports and guidebooks analyzing different definitions of data variables, we need commensurate attention to who should do what based on the data. Only then will results accountability systems fulfill their potential of improving outcomes for children and families.

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The opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Pew Charitable Trusts. Past articles on results accountability can be found in The Evaluation Exchange *Vol. IV, No. 1, 1998, Vol. II, No. 3, 1996, and Vol. II, No. 1, 1996. Archived issues are available at www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/eval/archives.html.*

> new & noteworthy

Bare, J. (2002). **Try my elixir**. *Foundation News & Commentary. 43*(1), 22-24. Acknowledging that non-evaluators tend not to care much about how evaluators do their jobs, Bare presents 10 ways to communicate the value of evaluation to grantmaking colleagues.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation. ***Children at risk: State trends 1990-2000***. (2002, March). Baltimore, MD: Author. A Population Reference Bureau/Kids Count report based on the Census 2000 Supplementary Survey, which finds that, while conditions for children improved overall in the last decade, the child poverty rate remained practically unchanged. **www.aecf.org/kidscount/c2ss**

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation **Pursuing Perfection initiative** is "intended to help physician organizations and hospitals dramatically improve patient outcomes by pursuing perfection in all of their major care processes." **www.ihi.org/pursuingperfection**

Leichter, H. M., & Tryens, J. (2002, September). ***Achieving better health outcomes: The Oregon benchmark experience***. New York: Milbank Memorial Fund. This report examines and assesses the history of benchmarking for health by the Oregon Progress Board. **www.milbank.org**

Mosteller, F., & Boruch, R. (Eds.). (2002). ***Evidence matters: Randomized trials in education research***. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution Press. This book explores the history and current status of research on practices in education, particularly the need for credible studies of the effects of education programs. The contributors focus on randomized field trials, but also consider other approaches to generating empirical evidence, such as sample surveys, narrative studies, and exploratory research. **www.brook.edu/dybdocroot/savingsforthepoor/evidence_matters.htm**

The Pew Partnership for Civic Change's **Pew Civic Entrepreneur Initiative** is a nationwide project to equip a diverse group of citizens, or "civic entrepreneurs," to play a greater role in decision making in their communities. It includes a LeadershipPlenty training curriculum, which has an evaluation component. **www.pew-partnership.org/pcei/pcei.html**

The Results and Performance Accountability Implementation Guide, developed by Mark Friedman, is an Internet-based guide for individuals and groups looking to implement some form of results or performance accountability in their organization or community. **www.raguide.org**

New Resources From HFRP

A **new teaching case** on the standards movement in education is available on our FINE (Family Involvement Network of Educators) website—***Defining "Fine": Communicating Academic Progress to Parents***. Read it at **www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/fine/resources/teaching-case/progress.html**.

We have just published **two new research briefs** in our Issues and Opportunities in Out-of-School Time Evaluation series.

- Brief number 3, published in July 2002, entitled ***Documenting Progress and Demonstrating Results: Evaluating Small-Scale Out-of-School Time Programs***, provides small out-of-school time programs with the techniques, tools, and strategies they need to improve their programs and track their effectiveness over time.
- Brief number 4, published in August 2002, entitled ***Beyond the Head Count: Evaluating Family Involvement in Out-of-School Time***, offers an overview of how out-of-school time programs involve families and how they can evaluate family involvement.

The entire series of out-of-school time research briefs is available on our website at **www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/afterschool/resources.html#issues** or email us at **hfrp_pubs@gse.harvard.edu** to order hard copies.

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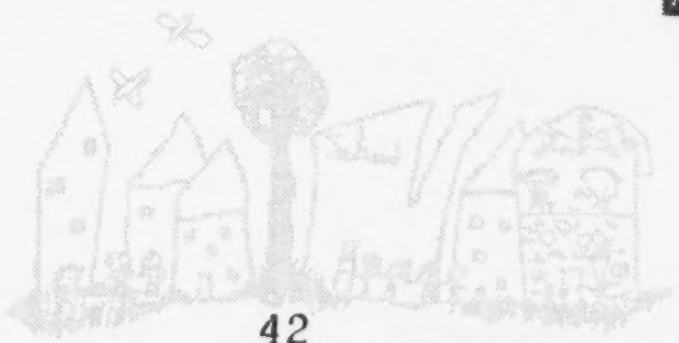

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the evaluation exchange

A PERIODICAL ON EMERGING STRATEGIES IN EVALUATING CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

HARVARD FAMILY RESEARCH PROJECT ■ HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION ■ VOLUME VIII NUMBER 1 ■ WINTER 2002

from the director's desk

Heather Weiss

A good message bears repeating. A little over a year ago, we released an issue of *The Evaluation Exchange* on the topic of strategic communications (Vol. VII, No. 1). We knew we were stepping into largely uncharted territory at the time; we didn't anticipate just how high the demand would be for help in navigating it. As a result, we are devoting another issue to this topic, focusing this time on *public communication campaigns*.

We define public communication campaigns as those that use a coordinated set of media, interpersonal, and/or community-based communication activities to shape behavior toward desirable social outcomes. As some of the campaigns discussed in this issue demonstrate, those behaviors might include getting more involved in our children's education, mobilizing for investments in early care and education, using methods of family planning and HIV/AIDS prevention, or carpooling to work to reduce ground-level ozone emissions. The outcomes of those behaviors—the campaigns' ultimate goals—may include healthier children, families, and communities or specific policy results that lead to these outcomes.

Public communication campaigns are growing more sophisticated every day. Campaign designers are diversifying their strategies and abandoning the flawed notion that information alone changes behavior. More campaigns are using public media efforts in tandem with community-based organizing and complementary "ground campaigns" to enhance the campaign's reach and effects. And more campaigns are tackling the complex challenges of moving large groups of people to take policy-related actions (that may or may not affect them personally). The first half of this issue offers articles to inform such promising campaign practice.

The second half of this issue focuses on campaign *evaluation*. Earlier this year, HFRP did an environmental scan of this field (see page 19 for how to obtain a copy). We found overall that evaluation has not kept pace with campaigns' innovations, and information is lacking on appropriate designs, methods, and outcomes.

At the same time, and as the articles in this issue demonstrate, we have some fertile ground on which to learn and grow. We have, for example, decades of behavioral change and communications research that offers much in the way of theory and methods to help us design and evaluate campaigns. We have rich examples of domestic and international campaign evaluations, many of which come from the public health arena. We have decades of experience from organizations like the Ad Council that demonstrate how to approach and *use* campaign research and evaluation.

As the experts in this issue reveal, this field is ripe for more exploration and development. For example, few evaluators are directly informing campaign design and strategy, feeding back what is and isn't working, and suggesting how to apply that information. And we have yet to tackle how to measure and determine a campaign's effects on policy.

HFRP will continue to track responses to these challenges and uncover new developments. As always, we welcome your thoughts and contributions. We also hope you will help us with our *Evaluation Exchange* "ground campaign" by sharing this issue with others who will find it relevant and provocative.

Heather

Heather B. Weiss, Ed.D.
Founder & Director
Harvard Family Research Project

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the evaluation exchange

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> theory & practice

Using Behavioral Change Theory to Communicate Effectively: The Case of Latino Parent Involvement

Anne Pollock of the Harvard Graduate School of Education and Julia Coffman and M. Elena Lopez of Harvard Family Research Project reveal how to design communications that are more effective at changing behavior by keeping in mind the factors that influence behavior.

Designing programs or communication campaigns to affect behaviors requires first being able to understand why people behave the way they do. Interventions are more effective when they are based on research that tells us what factors influence a person's decision to perform a specific behavior, or the ways in which an existing behavior can be channeled toward more desirable outcomes.

Fortunately, decades of research have taught us much about human behavior. Behavioral change theorists now agree on eight factors known to influence behavior: (1) intention, (2) environmental constraints, (3) skills, (4) attitudes, (5) norms, (6) self-standards, (7) emotion, and (8) self-efficacy.[1]

These factors can be useful for planning campaigns, interventions, and their evaluations. One way to do this is to examine empirical research findings about the behavior that needs to change against the framework of the eight behavioral factors. Together they can serve as a diagnostic guide or framework for planning an intervention's goals and components, as well as its evaluation. An example of this approach follows.

Example: Increasing Latino Parent Involvement

Latino[2] children perform significantly behind their non-Latino peers on most indicators of educational success. Identifying and increasing the ways in which parents are involved in their children's education is one promising strategy for increasing the academic achievement of Latino students.[3] Latino parents, however, tend to be hesitant about initiating communication with teachers and schools, and educators often misunderstand this to mean a lack of interest in their children's education. Many teachers and schools do not reach out to Latino parents as a result.

Apply Relevant Research Findings

The table on page 3 offers a sample of research findings about Latino parent involvement as they apply to the eight main factors that affect behavior.

Develop Messages Based on Theory and Research

Messages for a campaign to influence Latino parents' involvement in their children's education should be based on the issues and topics that the research findings suggest are most important. Messages can influence both parent and teacher behaviors; the research suggests both are important.

For illustrative purposes, following are sample parent-directed messages, arranged according to the eight factors known to influence behavior. They are adapted from actual campaigns designed to increase Latino involvement in education—the Hispanic

continued on page 18

[1] Fishbein, M., Triandis, H. C., Kanfer, F. H., Becker, M., Middlestadt, S. E., & Eichler, A. (2001). Factors influencing behavior and behavior change. In A. Baum, T. A. Revenson & J. E. Singer (Eds.), *Handbook of health psychology* (pp. 3-17). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. Available at www.erlbaum.com/Features/Baum.pdf (Acrobat file).

[2] The term Latino refers to populations that have some connection (linguistic, cultural, or otherwise) to the Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America—Mexico, Central or South America (excluding Brazil), Puerto Rico, and Cuba.

[3] Inger, M. (1992, August). *Increasing the school involvement of Hispanic parents*. New York: ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. EDO-UD-92-3)

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Behavioral Factors	Applicable Research Findings[4]
1. **Intention** – a commitment to perform the behavior	• Latino parents rear their children within the cultural frame of *educación*, which refers to "the total task of bringing up a moral and responsible child."[5]
2. **Environmental Constraints** – restrictions to performing the behavior	• Parents may have time constraints, e.g., jobs that do not offer working hour autonomy or flexibility. • Parents may lack affordable or trusted child care or transportation. • Many schools serving Latino students lack Latino teachers who can establish rapport with families.[6]
3. **Skills** – abilities to perform the behavior	• Latino parents may not be able to understand or speak English, limiting their types of involvement. • Level of education can be a barrier to homework help. • Teachers lack training to work with parents.
4. **Attitudes** – beliefs about performing the behavior	• Latino parents care about their children's education, have high goals for them, and are interested in being involved. • Parents may have a low level of comfort and previous negative experiences with schools. • Latino parents express a cultural belief in the authority of the school and teachers and tend to have limited knowledge of the U.S. school system. • Teachers may intimidate Latino parents. • Teachers and parents may have different conceptions of what parent involvement means.
5. **Social Norms** – perceived social pressure to perform a behavior	• Parents are more likely to be involved when their friends are involved.
6. **Self-standards** – whether performing the behavior is consistent with self-image	• Latina mothers may view themselves as educated people and identify themselves as teachers who give their children an *educación*.[7] • Latino parents can transcend their fear of schools to become involved for the benefit of their children. Family involvement is an expression of parents' love and concern for their children.[8]
7. **Emotion** – emotional reaction to performing the behavior	• Latino parents can gain pride and confidence by participating in family involvement projects that deeply respect their knowledge and strengths.[9]
8. **Self-efficacy** – perception in one's capability to perform the behavior	• Latino parents can be resourceful and seek family and friends to help their adolescent children with homework.[10] • Latino parents stress the positive effects they can have on the school environment and acknowledge the importance of establishing a strong relationship with the school.[11]

[4] Unless otherwise noted, the research findings are based on Tinkler, B. (2002, April 3). *A review of literature on Hispanic/Latino parent involvement in K-12 education*. Retrieved July 23, 2002, from http://www.buildassets.org/products/latinoparentreport/latinoparentrept.htm

[5] Reese, L., Balzano, S., Gallimore, R., & Goldenberg, C. (1991, November). *The concept of educación: Latino family values and American schooling*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Chicago, IL.

[6] Solorzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2000). Toward a critical race theory of chicana and chicano education. In C. Tejada, C. Martinez & Z. Leonardo (Eds.), *Charting new terrains of chicana(o)/latina(o) education* (pp. 35-65). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, Inc.

[7] Villenas, S. (2001). Latina mothers and small-town racisms: Creating narratives of dignity and moral education in North Carolina. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 32*(1), 3-28.

[8] Scribner, J. D., Young, M. D., & Pedroza, A. (1999). Building collaborative relationships with parents. In P. Reyes, J. D. Scribner & A. P. Scribner (Eds.), *Lessons from high-performing Hispanic schools* (pp. 36-60). New York: Teachers College Press.

[9] Ada, A. F., & Smith, N. J. (1998). Fostering the home-school connection for Latinos. In M. L. Gonzalez, A. Huerta-Macias & J. V. Tinajero (Eds.), *Educating Latino students: A guide to successful practice* (pp. 47-60). Lancaster, PA: Technomic Publishing Co.

[10] Arzubiaga, A., Ceja, M., & Artiles, A. (2000). Transcending deficit thinking about Latinos' parenting styles: Toward an ecocultural view of family life. In C. Tejada, C. Martinez & Z. Leonardo (Eds.), *Charting new terrains of chicana(o)/latina(o) education* (pp. 93-106). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, Inc.

[11] Scribner, J. D., Young, M. D., & Pedroza, A. (1999). Building collaborative relationships with parents. In P. Reyes, J. D. Scribner & A. P. Scribner (Eds.), *Lessons from high-performing Hispanic schools* (pp. 36-60). New York: Teachers College Press.

Using Information Architecture to Improve Communication

Erin Harris from Harvard Family Research Project, with Suzanne Muchin, CEO of Civitas, illustrate the design concept "information architecture" for displaying complex information clearly and simply.

Those of us in professions where information is our primary commodity are constantly on the lookout for ways to improve our ability to communicate successfully in an increasingly information-saturated world. We want people not only to notice and read our work, but also to *use* it and *learn* from it. As we struggle to communicate more effectively in the face of an overwhelming amount of information competing for our attention, we need to challenge the standard reporting and presentation conventions and explore new alternatives. Information architecture is one possible tool to improve our communication capacity.

Information Architecture

Architect Richard Saul Wurman coined the term information architecture in 1975. Information architecture uses basic elements of architectural design (e.g., graphics, color, layout, fonts, and empty space) to convey information as efficiently and simply as possible. It is an attempt to make the complex clear.

Five principles are central to information architecture:[1]

1. You understand something new relative to something you already understand.
2. There are just five ways to organize information, referred to as LATCH: Location (e.g., a map), Alphabet (e.g., a dictionary), Time (e.g., a timeline), Category (e.g., a department store), and Hierarchy (e.g., from largest to smallest).
3. Don't beautify; clarify.
4. To decide which information is worth keeping, determine what you really want to know.
5. Most information is useless. Give yourself permission to dismiss it.

[1] As outlined in Fischetti, M. (1997, August). Blueprint for information architects. *Fast Company, 10*, 186.

References and Related Resources

Wurman, R. S. (2002). *Understanding children: The guidebook for children 0 to 3*. Newport, RI: TOP.

Wurman, R. S. (1997). *Information architects*. New York: Graphis Publications.

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Information Architecture at Work

Information architecture has been used for a wide variety of topics—most recently for child development issues in *Understanding Children: The Guidebook for Children 0 to 3*. Civitas, a national child development communications nonprofit, partnered with Wurman to bring his information architecture approach to this book. According to Civitas CEO Suzanne Muchin, information architecture was a natural fit:

> The Civitas mission is to translate essential child development content into vehicles that are accessible to parents, caregivers, and frontline professionals. So this is literally our mission—to act in a certain way as information architects of information about young children.

The book condenses the myriad of child development resources into an essential guidebook with the goal of providing a comprehensive knowledge base to assist adults in making informed decisions about the well-being of young children. Using information architecture, the book strives to communicate to a broad audience, cutting across such barriers as socioeconomic status, education, and experience; those purchasing the book range from "regular" parents and caregivers to child care professionals and community organizers.

Understanding Children uses a question and answer format, a data-driven and nonlinear layout, action-focused content, and the liberal use of color and descriptive illustrations. A two-page spread from the book is provided on page 5 to give a sense of the book's layout. The book's specific presentation techniques—with examples from the two-page spread—include:[2]

Color-Coded Organization: The book is divided into issue-based sections (e.g., Childcare) with a different color assigned to each.

Big Question: Each spread includes a color-coded "big question" in the top right-hand corner that frames the topic. (E.g., What do I need to know about child care centers?) The top two thirds of each page includes theories, explanations, charts, graphs, diagrams, illustrations, and icons that address the big question.

Summary Answer: The big question is followed by an answer in summary form. (E.g., A good child care center may be hard to find. Look for low staff turnover, current licenses, and small group sizes.)

Questions: Pages are filled with questions, related to the big question, for caregivers to ask. (E.g., Will my child develop behavioral problems if I send him to a child care center?)

Answers: Questions are followed by answers with data and opinions from experts. (E.g., Not likely. The Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development, conducted by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, has followed over 1,200 families around the country since their baby's birth.

[2] Excerpts reprinted with permission from the publishers.

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While the study doesn't provide clear-cut answers as to what leads to behavior problems in child care settings, it does find ... Good parenting matters ... Quality of care matters ... Type of care matters.)

Marginalia: Facts and figures and other informational asides appear in the side margins. (E.g., Almost half of parents with children under six have used a child care program in the past year.)

Action Items: The bottom one third of each page contains action items that include specific tips, lists of relevant books, websites, and other resources for caregivers to use (e.g., How to make drop-off time easier).

For organizations whose goal is to educate through publications and other forms of written communication, information architecture provides a viable alternative to "traditional" written communication methods that are more linear and text-driven. The use of graphic design techniques is conducive to communicating in a way that makes information more accessible and tangible to a wide audience, meaning that the information is more likely to be understood, absorbed, and translated into action.

For information about how to obtain Understanding Children, *visit www.civitas.org.*

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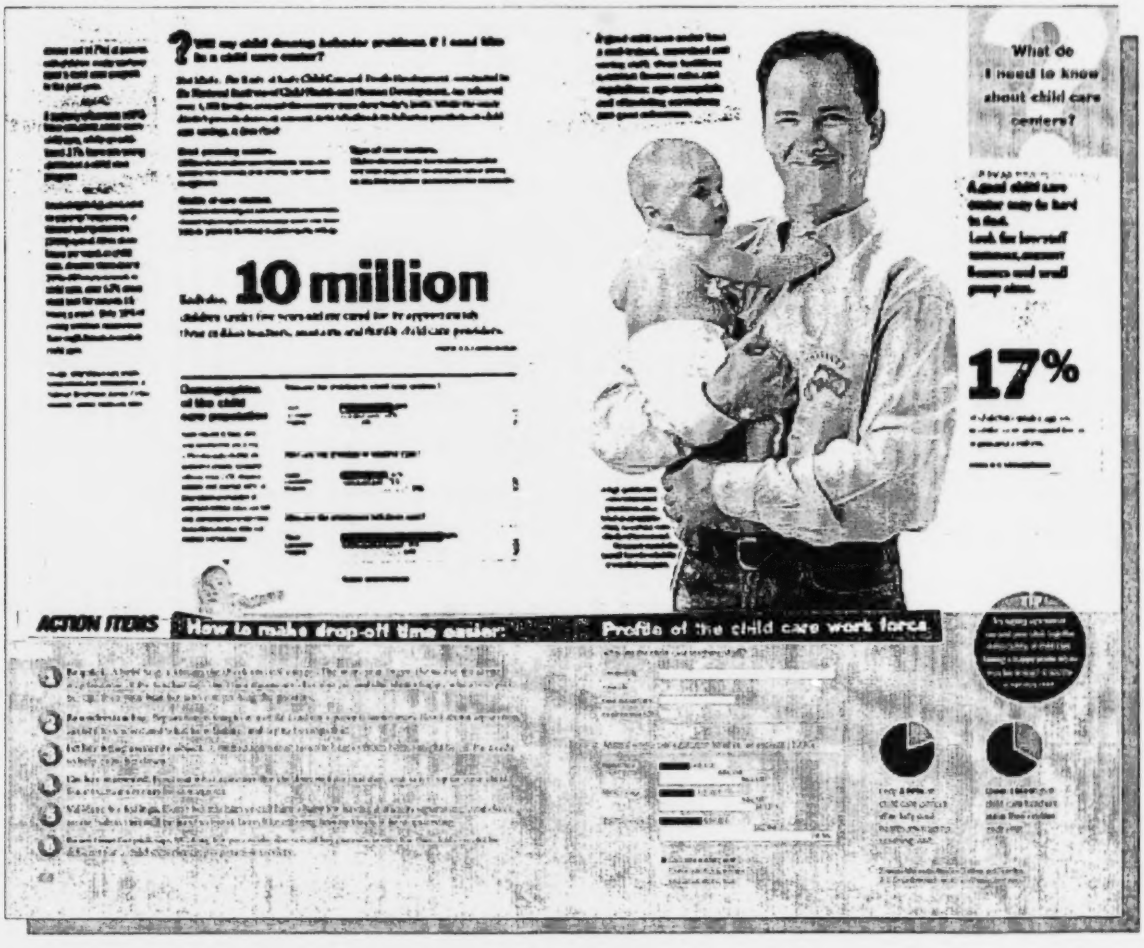
A two-page spread from Understanding Children: The Guidebook for Children 0 to 3.


10 million
What do I need to know about child care centers?
17%
ACTION ITEMS
How to make drop-off time easier:
Profile of the child care work force

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Credibility, Relevance, and Inescapable Truths: Effective Messages for Youth

Tim Mask describes three strategies for improving the effectiveness of behavior change campaigns that were used with success by the Partnership for a Healthy Mississippi.

Working with the Partnership for a Healthy Mississippi to create multimedia, youth-oriented ad campaigns that counter tobacco marketing, our agency has developed a formula for strategic communications with impressive results. Since we launched the campaigns, Mississippi has witnessed a reversal of escalating youth tobacco use. Since 1999, the Youth Risk Behavior Survey has measured a 25% decrease in smoking by high school students and a 30% decrease in middle school students.

The formula we used is not tobacco-specific. It applies well to any youth-targeted social marketing effort, especially if it is health related. Our methodology calls for all social marketing strategies to center around three aspects: credibility with the audience, relevance to the audience, and inescapable truths.

Strategy 1 – Credibility

Credibility is the individual youth's assessment of the communication. Is it believable? Has the youth had an experience (first- or second-hand) that casts doubt on the message? For example, anti-smoking messages stating "cool kids don't smoke" or "you can't be a cheerleader and smoke" are obviously lacking in credibility, as there is no shortage of "cool" kids and cheerleaders who smoke. However, a message that states "if you smoke, you can't play sports as well" might be credible. It is a given that some "star" athletes smoke, but the question might be raised as to how good the star athlete might be if he or she did not.

Strategy 2 – Relevance

Relevance relates to credibility. It is important to establish relevance in the youth's perceived world, rather than the actual world—and these two worlds are not the same. Social marketers must look beyond *what* youth do and examine *why* youth do what they do. Understanding the psychographic condition and mindset (i.e., attitudes, preferences, values, habits, feelings, lifestyle choices, etc.) of a particular generation or youth subculture is imperative before relevance can be established.

Strategy 3 – Inescapable Truths

Inescapable truths are best described as short, impactful statements, often facts or statistics, which the audience cannot rationally dismiss out of hand. Both youth and adults are apt to use "intellectual alibis" when faced with a social marketing message that negatively portrays an aspect of their personal behavior. For example, an anti-smoking message that reads "smoking causes lung cancer" leaves the door open for an intellectual alibi. Youth targeted by this message could simply believe that smoking is something they will stop by the time they are 25, finish college, get married, etc. Inescapable truths prevent youth from making such rationalizations. A youth-targeted anti-smoking message that reads "90% of people who die from smoking started before age 18" prevents the application of an intellectual alibi.

Evaluating the Strategies

Campaign evaluations that consider these three factors look beyond the final numbers. Behavioral change is, of course, the ultimate goal. However, in measuring campaign success in stages, it is also important to evaluate any changes/perceptions in the youth mindset about message credibility and relevance. The degree to which messages are credible and relevant will be measured in attitudinal changes. Brand awareness and message recall are important, but not as important as attitudinal shifts.

We address credibility and relevance in an effort to change attitudes; we use inescapable truths to change behavior. Initially, we can evaluate our inescapable truths through message recall and awareness rates. This will later translate into a behavioral change, assuming the fact or truth presented really is "inescapable."

To measure a campaign's success, it is necessary to evaluate both individual psychographical impact and individual behavioral shifts. A particular campaign might address youth in a relevant and credible manner, but not fully close the door on rational intellectual alibis. Psychographic and behavioral evaluation allows for successful communication components to remain intact, while uncovering areas where refinement is necessary.

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Related Resources

Lynn, R. (2002). *Marketing to millennials: How to break through with a breakthrough generation.* Jackson, MS: Maris, West & Baker Advertising Communications.

Mask, T. (2002, July/August). The power of multi-messaging. *Kidscreen Magazine*, 21-22. Available at www.mwb.com/youth/publications.php?pub=kidscreen_article.

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Understanding Research: Ten Tips

Stephanie Schaefer of the National Association of Child Advocates offers tips on how to evaluate research information for its credibility.

Research allows us to assess the effectiveness of policies and programs affecting the lives of children and families. Having research evidence to recommend or refute specific policy choices is especially relevant in this era of increased demand for accountability in human services and government.

But how can you tell if a given research study is one you can trust? Below are tips to evaluate the research you encounter.

1. ***Consider the source.*** Evaluate the credibility of the individual(s) and the organization that produced the research. Research produced by respected researchers and institutions is more likely to be trustworthy. Also, research produced or funded by groups with a strong political or commercial agenda is less trustworthy, since these groups have a vested interest in the study's findings supporting their viewpoint.

2. ***Media is also a source to be evaluated.*** Media coverage may not fully or accurately summarize the original research. Because research can be technical and complex, and because media coverage often seeks to be attention grabbing and succinct, media reporting of research sometimes oversimplifies the research, leading to misinterpretation.

3. ***Has the research been published, and where?*** Research published in peer-reviewed research journals is more trustworthy because it has been scrutinized by other researchers before being published. Unpublished research, or research published in publications that don't critically evaluate it, has not gone through such scrutiny. However, even good research starts out unpublished, so just because a study is unpublished does not mean that it is poor quality.

4. ***Research results are really about the topic as measured, not as we may think of it.*** Look closely at how the topic in a study was measured. Since a research topic, such as aggression, could mean different things to different people, researchers always come up with a more specific definition of the topic they are studying. The results from a study are really about the precise definition, rather than the larger topic.

5. ***Different types of research have different strengths.*** Another indicator of the quality of a research study, and the claims that can be made based on it, is the study's research design. Experimental design studies offer the strongest evidence about the impact of a program. Quasi-experimental studies are especially useful for studying complex systems as they exist naturally in the community. Qualitative studies often provide descriptive, story-like accounts of people's experiences in a program or in a community.

6. ***Sampling is more important than sample size.*** While a study's sample size is important, even more important is the way the sample was collected. Quantitative research is based on the assumption that the findings for a sample of people can be generalized to the larger population. If the procedures to select the study's sample are not done well, then we cannot assume that the findings for the sample generalize to the population, and the study's findings would not be valid.

7. ***Statistical significance explained.*** One of the things advocates value most about research is getting "hard data," i.e., numbers, about the effects of a policy on children. A study reports a statistically significant difference between those who received a program and those that did not. But what does statistical significance mean, and what can we conclude from it? A statistically significant result is one that is unlikely to be due to chance. Researchers use statistics to test whether the results they found are likely to be due to the effect of the program being studied and not to other unrelated factors.

   Statistical significance is different than the substantive significance, or meaningfulness, of a finding. A result may be statistically significant but unimportant. Conversely, a result may not be statistically significant, but it may be meaningful.

continued on page 9

Related Resources

NACA's Translating Research Into Advocacy Project, funded through the generous support of the David and Lucile Packard Foundation. Available at www.childadvocacy.org/translatingresearch.htm.

Schaefer, S. A. (2002). *Welfare to work: Does it work for kids? Research on work and income welfare experiments*. Washington, DC: National Association of Child Advocates. Available at www.childadvocacy.org/welfaretowork.pdf (Acrobat file).

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Keeping It Local

Julie Parente of the statewide child advocacy organization, Voices for Illinois Children, describes a component of their "ground strategy" for effectively communicating campaign messages.

In 2001, Voices for Illinois Children implemented a statewide public awareness campaign called *Start Early: Learning Begins at Birth*, with the aim of increasing awareness of the crucial learning that occurs in years birth to three. The campaign used a number of "high-tech" communication features, such as paid cable and network television ads (including one that featured two "talking" babies), and radio, newspaper, and billboard advertising.

Equally important to the campaign, however, was the campaign's low-tech "ground strategy." This strategy used a corps of local spokespeople trained on the campaign's core messages to increase the campaign's reach and influence with audiences in communities throughout the state. The basic premise was that audiences would pay more attention to the campaign's messages if they came from people they already knew and trusted.

Training Local Spokespeople

The process to establish the corps of local spokespeople began with a pre-campaign statewide survey that identified categories of spokespeople registered Illinois voters considered to be credible on early childhood issues: police chiefs, pediatricians, kindergarten teachers, and business leaders. Voices for Illinois Children then tapped those types of individuals to become local spokespeople and receive media training.

Voices' statewide partners, such as the teachers' union, the state chapter of the American Academy of Pediatricians, and the advocacy organization, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Illinois, helped identify 40 spokespeople. Voices arranged trainings with these spokespeople in six major Illinois media markets, including Chicago, where the TV ads were going to air. The trainings were purposely small (six to ten people) and short, lasting no more than 90 minutes. They were held in conference rooms, classrooms, and living rooms, and scheduled either at the beginning or end of the workday to maximize attendance.

Spokespeople learned about new brain research that demonstrates the importance of quality early childhood education through a short PowerPoint presentation. They watched one of the campaign's TV ads and learned about Voices' key messages outlined in a one-page message memo.

After some quick tips on how to deal with the media (which many spokespeople were already savvy about), the trainer asked each participant a question so they could practice their responses. For example, "You're a police chief. Why do you care about child care?" and "What can people in our community do to help improve early childhood education?"

The spokespeople also posed for photographs that were then used in print ads in their hometown newspapers where they would be recognized. One ad read: "Why would a bank president support quality child care? Because I know that good early learning environments always pay off. And that's a good investment in our kids and our state." (See page 9 for another example.)

Spokespeople in Action

Spokespeople participated in the rollout of the early childhood ad campaign in several ways. Some spoke at a news conference in the state capital and were interviewed by newspaper, radio, and TV reporters. All spokespeople's names were included in media kits that were mailed to reporters across Illinois, and several were interviewed. Their names also were included in a video news release broadcast to all TV stations.

A number of articles using local sources resulted. For example, Elmhurst Police Chief John Millner was quoted as saying, "The research is so clear that if we invest in our children now, it will clearly make a difference later on. We're tired of seeing the looks on the victims' families' faces when they say, 'Why did this happen to us? Why were we victimized?' If we look at this in the long run, maybe we won't have to invest as much time in building prisons, which is fine for me."

In another article, Springfield pediatrician Dr. Raymond Castaldo said he often sees kindergarteners that teachers believe have medical problems, and noted that many of these children would have benefited from the social and learning skills taught in quality early childhood programs. "I recognize the need to go back and start earlier," he said.

Voices' corps of local spokespeople became a key ongoing component of the Start Early campaign. In addition to speaking with reporters, many became

Pointers for Training Local Spokespeople

- Look for uncommon supporters. People trust authority figures—law enforcement, medical personnel, teachers—and find them credible. Many may already be experienced in talking to the media.
- Tap into statewide networks and partners for help in identifying local spokespeople. They can help find the right person for your message, and it builds relationships.
- Update your spokespeople on the progress of the campaign so they feel a part of a bigger movement. Send periodic email or mail one-page updates.
- Look for opportunities to involve spokespeople in advocacy. Some may be interested in writing letters to newspapers or their elected officials. Others may want training on additional topics or offer to host a community forum.

more involved in advocacy. Some wrote letters to the editor, talked to their lawmakers about early childhood policy, or received message training on other topics.

For more information on the Start Early campaign, see Voices' website at voices4kids.org. The campaign's TV ads can be viewed on the site and can be made available to other nonprofits for use as public service announcements.

Voices for Illinois Children recently joined with two partners to launch a new statewide public awareness campaign, "Early Learning Illinois: Access. Options. Opportunities." The campaign used a voter registration drive, community meetings, and a postcard campaign to inform gubernatorial candidates that all children should be healthy, eager to learn, and ready to succeed by the time they enter school.

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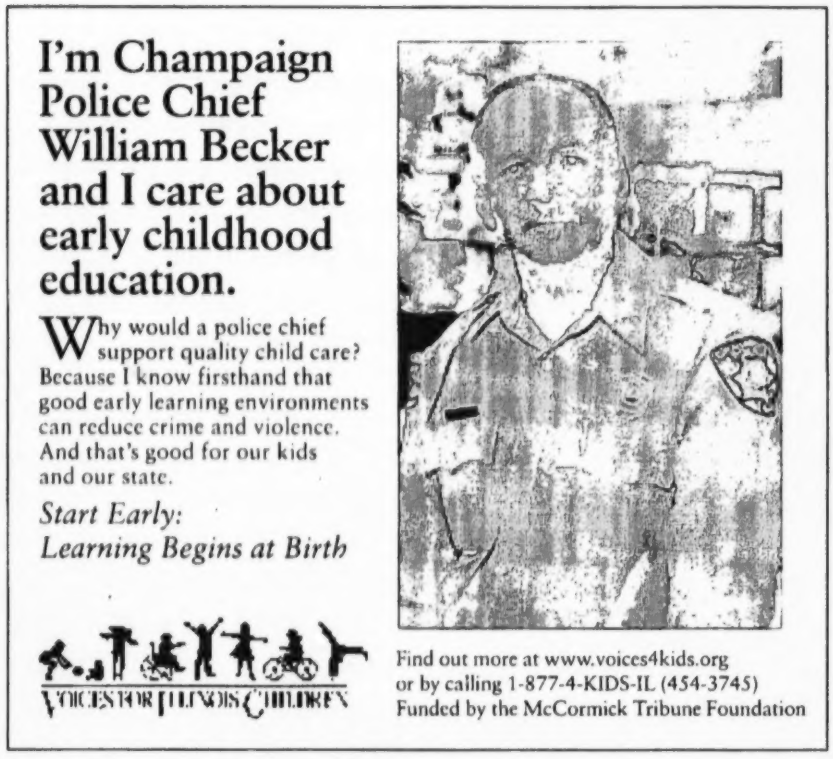
I'm Champaign Police Chief William Becker and I care about early childhood education.
Why would a police chief support quality child care? Because I know firsthand that good early learning environments can reduce crime and violence. And that's good for our kids and our state.
Start Early: Learning Begins at Birth
VOICES FOR ILLINOIS CHILDREN
Find out more at www.voices4kids.org or by calling 1-877-4-KIDS-IL (454-3745)
Funded by the McCormick Tribune Foundation

An ad from Voices for Illinois Children's 2001 public awareness campaign featuring a local spokesperson.

Ten Tips

continued from page 7

8. ***Research findings are about groups.*** Research results are usually based on comparisons between groups of people. This makes research findings particularly relevant for policy decisions since policies affect groups of people, but less relevant for individual case decisions.
9. ***All research is not created equal.*** When comparing the results from different studies with conflicting findings, higher-quality studies should be given more weight. Better studies can refute poorer studies; there is not a one-to-one comparison.
10. ***Any one study is not the whole story.*** Although we usually come across research one study at a time, research is most valuable when many specific studies are taken together to tell the whole story of what we know on a given topic. Any single study, no matter how good, needs to be viewed in the context of other research on the topic.

Excerpted from: Schaefer, S. A. (2001). Understanding research: Top ten tips for advocates and policymakers. *Washington, DC: National Association of Child Advocates. Available online at www.childadvocacy.org/understandingresearch.pdf (Acrobat file).*

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A conversation with
Ethel Klein

Ethel Klein is a long-time campaign strategist and pollster. Currently, she is president of EDK Associates, a strategic research firm based in New York City. Dr. Klein has designed campaigns for nonprofit organizations and foundations on issues of women's rights, low-income housing, environmental protection, gay and lesbian rights, work and family policies, health education, and tax reform. Prior to starting her own firm, she was a professor at Harvard University (1979–1984) and Columbia University (1984–1990). She is the author of several books, including *Gender Politics* (1984) and *Ending Domestic Violence: Changing Public Perceptions/Halting the Epidemic* (1997).

Q What are the main ingredients of successful public communication campaigns that are designed to change behavior?

A The first and most common ingredient would be increasing *knowledge* and *awareness*. If people don't recognize the issue or problem, then that is where you start. If people are aware of the issue, but it's not important to them, then you work on increasing its *saliency*.

But you can't get stuck there. Too many people think that if you deliver the bad news, people are going to be rational and change their behavior. That will change some people's behavior, but it is never enough. There is an accumulation of knowledge now that says you have to go beyond awareness in order to make real change.

For most of the issues we care about, knowledge and awareness are not the problem. We need to struggle with increasing and measuring public will and action.

You have to change behavior by giving people something to do to change it. The trick is figuring out where the locus of responsibility for the behavior change should be. Is it purely on the individual performing the behavior or is it also on creating public will and social responsibility to help make that change happen? You have to look at the issue's epidemiology and ask, "What are the root causes and what sustains the behavior?"

What you'll find is that to get results you have to focus on the *social context* surrounding the behavior and increase *social responsibility* for helping to change it. For example, with AIDS, just saying persuasively "AIDS will kill you" did not change behavior. Scare tactics just moved people into denial. We learned, from a great deal of public education research and evaluation, to create a broad sense of social responsibility for ending the epidemic and to engage, for example, the gay community in creating a social context where people wouldn't be afraid or ashamed or worry about retribution if they insisted someone use a condom.

Another example is the gun control movement. Support for gun control increased when the question changed from "Why did the kid pull the trigger?" to " How did the kid get the gun?" What helped was reframing from the individual action of stopping the kid from pulling the trigger to keeping the gun away from him in the first place. Once that reframing took place, a lot of social solutions followed, like licensing, registration, and trigger locks.

Once you've worked on social context and made individuals around a problem responsible, the question becomes "How do we *codify* it and make it law?" The emphasis on social context and responsibility will often provide the rationale needed to get laws passed. It's like the example of secondhand smoke. Laws were passed once we got people to say, "I want you to stop smoking because it is going to kill me." Getting large numbers of people to say this provided the rationale for laws that now ban smoking in public areas.

The Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) is a good example of a campaign that worked on all of these elements over time. Its evolution shows the need for a strategic progression to how campaigns unfold and what elements (e.g., awareness, saliency, social responsibility) they work on and when. One of the MADD campaign's early hallmarks was to work on public awareness and saliency by letting people know how many kids were killed in drunk driving accidents. This was followed by ads focused on individual responsibility that said, "Don't drink and drive." When that approach hit its limit in terms of results, the campaign moved on to the designated driver concept. It put the issue in a social context and said, "Because this behavior has social consequences, we have a right to put some constraints on it."

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So the campaign focused on getting people to say that somebody needs to be the designated driver and that people need to make sure their friends don't drink and drive. The first question after a drunk driving incident now is, "Why wasn't there a designated driver?" or "Why didn't someone take away the keys?" This acceptance of social responsibility provided the rationale needed to get stricter laws passed.

Q What do you think are the main challenges for the evaluation of public communication campaigns?

A One is seeing another side to the external approach in which evaluators say, "We take measurements, we're completely objective, and we come in at the end and give you information." That's a very good approach if you're not looking to help create change. Evaluators become seduced by the campaign because it's challenging and they're learning new things. But by the time they offer information the campaign is done and people don't want to hear it. The only way evaluations will really help campaigns is if they can help them as they're happening.

Campaigns are evolving and living things; they need to respond to what does and does not work. Evaluation is one of the few places campaigns can get that information. The challenge is to find a way in which you make evaluations dynamic and a part of the campaign process, while remaining objective. Let people know what's working and what's not working and how it can be fixed.

Evaluation should also help campaigns innovate. Many campaigns are stuck in a model, trying to replicate, for example, the MADD and anti-smoking campaigns. The problem is that those campaigns happened at a time when people weren't saturated with public service announcements. The more people replicate them, the less effective they are. We need to find new models and evaluation should help us find them.

For example, I worked on a domestic violence campaign that wanted to organize the business and faith-based communities. The campaign's approach initially was to try to get invited to talk at business meetings or in front of congregations. They assumed that if they were successful in getting invited to speak, they'd done organizing. I suggested they needed to do more and *work with* the clergy, for example, and help them go through their youth programs and change the curriculum, give them books, and so forth. This approach takes an enormous amount of upfront work, but once it's in place it replicates itself.

Ethel Klein

The campaign staff resisted this idea. So I asked them, "How will you know your approach is successful? Let's pick a measure and see how well it is working." One indicator was how many of their toolkits people picked up or called in for. They found these numbers were small. They learned that getting people to intervene, become active, leave a palm card, put up a poster, put on a bumper sticker, etcetera takes a persistent sales job. The message needs to be repeated constantly and the action needs to be supported. So they modified their approach. This is the level of involvement a constructive evaluation needs to have.

If you can build a process that's truly a learning environment and where people can say, "That's not working; let's figure out what else we can do," then that's a contribution. That's how a campaign passes on its lessons.

Q What do you think the field needs to do in order to move forward on the evaluation of public communications campaigns?

A I'd like to see evaluation and campaign planning done at the same time, where the evaluators are part of the campaign design and implementation team. One of the big challenges of a learning evaluation is getting all of the players to be team members. To do this we need evaluators who are good at evaluation *and* good at campaigns, and that's a small group. Campaign staff have to believe evaluators are giving them sound and strategic advice.

I'd also like to see campaigns get beyond awareness. I'd like to see the campaign team, with the evaluators, pick an issue where awareness is not the problem and struggle together with how to approach it. Again, for most of the issues we care about, knowledge and awareness are not the problem. We need to struggle with increasing and measuring public will and action.

Another challenge is that evaluation focuses too much on campaign outputs, or the things about campaigns that are easily measured, like the number of ads we develop and how many times they run on television. We need to focus more on outcomes like issue saliency and social responsibility that both contribute to learning and really capture what the campaign is trying to achieve. The caution here is to develop realistic and useful interim outcomes. Campaigns have to build momentum and support, and both campaign staff and evaluators need to remember that that takes time.

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Beyond the Usual Suspects

Julia Coffman, from Harvard Family Research Project, describes methods for campaign evaluation that are unique to the communications arena.

When thinking about methods to assess communication campaigns, the usual suspects come to mind—focus groups, interviews, surveys, and polling. Indeed, these methods are critical, and most campaign evaluations use them. Yet as campaigns become increasingly sophisticated both technologically and strategically, evaluators may want to explore methods of tracking and assessment used by media and communication researchers that are lesser known among program evaluators.

Media Tracking

Many services are available to offer reports of a campaign's coverage or an ad's placement in print and on television, radio, and the Internet. They can also return data on a campaign's exposure, using commercial advertising measures, such as the number of media impressions[1] or gross rating points.[2]

Print media tracking may offer data on the volume of coverage generated (e.g., column inches), messages sent versus messages placed, or content analysis of how often coverage reflects the campaign's messages.

Broadcast tracking can follow special encoding on a public service announcement (PSA) or video news release sent out through satellite uplink and return information about its downloading and airing. Services like Nielsen's Sigma Service track what stations air the ad, the airdate and time, the broadcast market, rank compared to other downloads in that market, and the estimated audience size.

Web or Internet tracking services can provide data hits and navigation patterns for an entire website or individual pages, and can offer reports on where banner ads run.

Ad Assessments

Ad assessments can provide measures of ad recognition (aided) and recall (unaided). A Starch Readership Study conducted by the company Roper ASW, for example, provides measures based on what ads readers of a specific publication have seen and read. The study is based on a minimum of 100 interviews conducted one to three weeks after a publication is released and at locations throughout the publication's distribution area. It delivers three scores: percentage of readers who remember seeing the ad, percentage who recalled the name of the advertiser or campaign, and percentage who read half or more of the ad. It also provides benchmarks of the ad's scores by comparing it to all other ads in the same publication, and to other ads in its same category.

Framing Analysis

Framing analysis examines how issues are presented or discussed (framed) in the media. It looks for key themes, expressed as arguments, metaphors, and descriptions to reveal which parts of the issue are emphasized and which are missing. Campaigns that attempt to influence an issue's media coverage may conduct pre and post framing analyses (after a sufficient amount of time has passed).

Social Network Analysis

Network analysis can be used to examine patterns of interpersonal communication as a campaign outcome[3] and as an independent variable influencing behavior.[4] For example, a campaign might attempt to affect who individuals turn to in order to get advice on a topic such as contraception or nutrition—aiming to decrease reliance on one's friends and increase reliance on people who are more knowledgeable about the topic. Network analysis can determine whether the campaign affected patterns of who people turn to for advice. While its value as an evaluation tool can be great, network analysis has been used infrequently in practice because the techniques are not well understood.[5]

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[1] The number of media impressions represents everyone who might have seen an ad or campaign. It often runs into the hundreds of thousands or millions.

[2] A campaign that buys media time can purchase a certain number of Gross Rating Points (GRPs). A campaign that attempts to earn media time can calculate how many GRPs were donated. If 1% of the target audience sees an ad once, the ad earns 1 GRP. A weekly score of 100 GRPs means that an average person in the target audience saw the ad one time that week. A weekly score of 500 GRPs means that an average person in the target audience saw the ad five times that week. GRPs are estimated based on the projected audience for a particular medium. These projections are based, for example in television, on Nielsen ratings.

Related Resources

Media Tracking Burrelle's (www.burrelles.com); Nielsen's Sigma Service (www.nielsenmedia.com); Arbitron (www.arbitron.com); Video Monitoring Services (www.vidmon.com); PRTrak (www.prtrak.com)

Ad Assessments Starch Readership Study (www.roperasw.com/products/starch.html

Framing Analysis Frameworks Institute (www.frameworksinstitute.org); Berkeley Media Studies Group (www.bmsg.org)

Social Network Analysis Dr. Thomas Valente, Department of Preventive Medicine, University of Southern California (www-hsc.usc.edu/~tvalente/index.html)

[3] Valente, T. W., & Saba, W. (2001). Campaign recognition and interpersonal communication as factors in contraceptive use in Bolivia. *Journal of Health Communication*, 6(4), 1-20.

[4] Valente, T. W., & Saba, W. (1998). Mass media and interpersonal influence in a reproductive health communication campaign in Bolivia. *Communication Research*, *25*, 96-124.

[5] For an introduction to the methodology, see Dr. Thomas Valente's 1999 publication, *Network analysis in public health*. Email the author for a copy at tvalente @usc.edu.

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Keeping Smokey Looking Good at Sixty

Over the last 60 years the Advertising Council has worked on hundreds of public service campaigns on a broad range of social issues, including such well-known campaigns as Smokey Bear and McGruff the Crime Dog. George Perlov, Senior Vice President for Planning, Research, and Foundation Relations, offers a look at the role of research and evaluation inside the Ad Council.

The Ad Council has an in-house research center that is committed to extensive "front-end" and "back-end" campaign research and evaluation.

Front-End Research and Evaluation

Our campaign development model is to partner with sponsoring nonprofit or governmental organizations and their causes, and to match our partners with advertising agencies that develop public service campaigns pro bono. In conjunction with our partners, we conduct qualitative and quantitative research to guide strategic and creative campaign development.

The campaign development process includes the sequence of 10 steps in the box on this page. This extensive front-end research and evaluation ensures that Ad Council public service announcements (PSAs) are of the quality and caliber needed to achieve their intended results.

Back-End Research and Evaluation

The Ad Council also evaluates the results of its work by tracking campaign performance measures and outcomes.

Performance measures These measures assess our success in disseminating the campaigns and getting the media interested in the campaigns' issues. Specific measures include the amount of donated media the campaign garners (television, radio, print, billboard, Internet) and the amount of press or publicity the campaign receives.

For television and radio tracking, ads are specially encoded so they can be tracked as they run (by Nielsen's Sigma Service for television and Arbitron for radio). For print tracking, we subscribe to Burrelle's clipping service. For the Internet, we receive reports from our ad-serving networks as well as individual sites that track where our banner ads run. The PRTrak service assesses and gives a dollar value to the amount of publicity received.

Short-term campaign outcomes We conduct pre and post target audience surveys to collect data on outcomes that include awareness of the issue, importance of the issue (saliency), awareness of the campaign, and relevant attitude and behavior questions addressed by the campaign. The posttest typically occurs six months after the campaign launches, or at a point where we determine significant media exposure has been achieved.

About a year ago, the Ad Council also launched a proprietary tracking study for 25 of its general audience adult-targeted campaigns. Every week 93 people are interviewed on their awareness of the issue, the importance of the issue, and where they are getting their information about the issue. We regularly look at these results in line with dissemination and ad response data (e.g., 800 number and website activity). In some cases, we conduct follow-up surveys with individuals who called the 800 numbers or visited the websites.

Long-term campaign outcomes Finally, we look at some of the longer-term outcomes a campaign is designed to achieve. In cases where our PSAs have been long running and have had major media exposure, the contributions of our campaigns to long-term results are apparent. For example, since the Smokey Bear campaign began, destruction of forests from wildfires has reduced from 22 million acres a year to less than 4 million acres.

The 10 Research and Evaluation Steps in the Campaign Development Process

1. *Literature review* – The review determines what is known about the type of campaign being developed or the issue area being addressed.
2. *Expert symposium* – Experts discuss the issue and answer questions for the creative team.
3. *Target audience research* – Qualitative research taps the campaign target audience's awareness, attitudes, etc. on the issue.
4. *Strategic brief* – The brief, based on information gained in previous steps, guides the creative team developing the advertisement.
5. *Campaign Review Committee (CRC)* – The CRC, made up of senior creative directors at top advertising agencies, reviews the brief and makes recommendations.
6. *Rough ad design* – The creative team develops rough storyboard and radio or print ads.
7. *Target audience feedback* – Rough ads are exposed and tested with a target audience sample.
8. *CRC Review* – The CRC reviews the developed materials and audience feedback and makes recommendations.
9. *Final product development* – Changes are made or new ideas developed based on feedback, and final products developed.
10. *CRC review* – The CRC has final approval over the ads.

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International Communication Research and Evaluation at the Johns Hopkins University Center for Communication Programs

Maria Elena Figueroa from the Johns Hopkins University Center for Communication Programs reveals the Center's methods for evaluating communication campaigns and offers five examples of their evaluations in progress.

The Johns Hopkins University Center for Communication Programs (JHU/CCP) was established in 1988 to focus attention on the important role of research-based strategic communications in health promotion and behavior change. The Center provides communication expertise worldwide on a range of issues, including family planning/reproductive health, HIV/AIDS/STD prevention, child survival, women's health, public health advocacy, health care reform, and environmental protection.

JHU/CCP has representatives in more than 25 countries, and through its over 700 country-based projects and programs, has helped transform the theory and practice of public health communication.

The Center follows a theory-driven, research-based approach to its communication, which gives research and evaluation a critical role. Built into different project stages, research and evaluation contribute to the understanding of the processes through which communication affects behavior for purposes of continuous program improvement.

Evaluation designs and methods of analysis used by JHU/CCP include:

- *Pre and post data collection* (often using surveys) with audience members exposed to the campaign and control or comparison groups of those not exposed
- *Panel surveys* in which the same members of the campaign's audience are interviewed before, during, and after the campaign
- *Interrupted time-series analysis* of indicators (e.g., health service statistics) before and after the campaign
- *Analysis of intervening effects* using statistical techniques such as multiple regression to rule out factors that may be confounding evaluation results, and path analysis to determine the effects of intervening variables and the causal pathways of communication
- *Interaction analysis* to examine the synergistic effects of mass media, interpersonal communication, and participation in community-level activities
- *Cost-effectiveness analysis*, which divides the total cost of the communication intervention by specific indicators of change attributed to the campaign
- *Communication (social) network analysis* to assess how information diffuses within a group or community, and to assess the effects of social influence on the adoption and maintenance of new behaviors
- *Image (character or method) mapping* to scale audience perceptions

JHU/CCP has many evaluation studies underway worldwide; five examples follow. Others include evaluations of community-based and mass media communication programs for safe motherhood in Guatemala and Indonesia, water and sanitation in Nicaragua, men's involvement in reproductive health in Jordan, and HIV and AIDS in India.

Arab Women Speak Out (seven Arab countries)

Arab Women Speak Out (AWSO) is an empowerment training program to help Arab women overcome social, economic, educational, and political obstacles. It is centered on the belief that media images can offer role models that inspire action. It uses media materials, produced by Arab women researchers and filmmakers, that include video profiles of women who have made positive changes in their lives, a tool for monitoring the image of women in the media, and a case study publication of 30 women from Jordan, Yemen, Egypt, Lebanon, Tunisia, and Palestine.

Workshops give women the analytic tools to think critically about their obstacles and opportunities, and to propose their own courses of action. AWSO also helps Arab women develop the self-esteem necessary to discuss their opinions and concerns with their husbands, families, and communities. More than 80,000 women in seven Arab countries have participated.

In 2001, JHU/CCP evaluated AWSO using a posttest only design with a nonequivalent control group. Data showed that participants were more likely than nonparticipants to engage in entrepreneurship, advise other women in negotiation techniques, and participate in activities that further community welfare. Future evaluation plans include assessing AWSO's community impact using social network analysis to determine the extent to which participants (1) talk to and take action with other participants, (2) are sought out by community members for advice, and (3) are perceived as community leaders. (Contact: Carol Underwood, email: cunderwood@jhuccp.org)

National Family Planning Communication Campaign (Philippines)

The Philippine Department of Health conducted a nationwide campaign in 2000 to increase family planning practice. The campaign broadcast four television spots with messages based on research that revealed women wanted a contraceptive method that was suitable for them or *hiyang* (a Tagalog word meaning a natural fit to one's own body), and that a husband's support for family planning was necessary.

The campaign's 2001 evaluation used a one-group, retrospective panel survey design. Results from the national sample of 1,516 married women from 16-49 years of age revealed the campaign increased spousal communication and acceptance of family planning as a social norm, and encouraged couples to choose a method that was suitable (*hiyang*) for them. The campaign

reached 79% percent of married women. Exposure was measured by unaided message recall, recognition of television spot photographs, and correct identification of 10 distinct messages conveyed. Overall, modern contraceptive use increased by 4.71 percentage points during the campaign's one-year period, compared to an annual increase of 1.1 percent over the previous five years.

Final data analysis will control for variables that may have confounded results and will determine the time-order of effects (using structural equation modeling). It will also estimate how much of the observed increase can be attributed to the campaign (using propensity score analysis). The goal is to determine the *cost-effectiveness* of the campaign. Preliminary findings show that the cost of each new family planning adopter is between $2–$4. (Contact: Larry Kincaid, email: lkincaid@jhuccp.org)

The Life Choices Program (Ghana)

Low levels of contraceptive use in Ghana are fueled by women's fears of contraceptive side effects and perceptions that others around them are opposed to family planning. Using facilitated discussions within existing women's groups and complementary short radio broadcasts, the Life Choices communication program attempts to combat these barriers by increasing social support for family planning and addressing contraception misconceptions and concerns.

The evaluation is using a panel survey design, administering two surveys (n=509) at two different time points to participants in nine women's groups. Three of these groups participated in Life Choices prior to the first survey; three groups participated between the two surveys; and three groups will participate after the second survey (control group).

In addition to assessing knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and media exposure, surveys ask participants to name their social network and their perceptions regarding the attitudes and behaviors of these women. The network of relations among women in each group will be mapped to understand the direct and indirect flow of information about family planning and identify how the Life Choices program activities contribute to this information diffusion. (Contact: Marc Boulay, email: mboulay@jhuccp.org)

Safe Motherhood Communication Strategy (Nepal)

Maternal death is the largest cause of mortality for women of reproductive age in Nepal. The Nepal Maternal and Neonatal Health Program's Safe Motherhood communication strategy aims to improve pregnancy outcomes by encouraging the use of appropriate maternal and neonatal health practices and services.

Messages are based on a creative Nepali language-based pneumonic memory aid that encourages audiences (especially husbands and mothers-in-law) to care for pregnant women, share love and affection, and prepare for childbirth. The multimedia strategy embeds messages in radio spots and dramas, a television drama, mobile video van shows, community-based street theater performances, and print materials.

The evaluation is using pre and post door-to-door surveys with currently pregnant women, their adult family members, community-based and government health workers, and select community influentials. A snowball sampling technique (asking those you survey to refer you to other respondents) is being used to reach a sample of 1,200 women and men. (Contact: Suruchi Sood, email: ssood@jhuccp.org)

HEART Campaign (Zambia)

The Helping Each Other Act Responsibly Together (HEART) Campaign, designed specifically for and by Zambian youth ages 13 to 19, uses television to inform young people about HIV/AIDS, discusses ways to avoid infection, and promotes abstinence and condom use.

The evaluation, which used pre and post surveys and a control group of nonviewers, found that viewers (those respondents who saw at least one televised message) were 1.5 times more likely to report primary or secondary abstinence (return to abstinence) than nonviewers. Viewers were also 1.7 times more likely to report using a condom during their last sexual encounter (holding background characteristics constant). (Contact: Carol Underwood, email: cunderwood@jhuccp.org)

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Related Resources

Recent JHU/CCP contributions on theory and methodology include:

Figueroa, M. E., Kincaid, D. L., Rani, M., & Lewis, G. (2002). *Communication for social change: An integrated model for measuring the process and its outcomes*. New York: The Rockefeller Foundation. Available at www.rockfound.org/Documents/540/sociakhange.pdf (Acrobat file).

Figueroa, M. E., Bertrand, J. T., & Kincaid, D. L. (2002, August). *Evaluating the impact of communication programs: Summary of an expert meeting organized by the MEASURE Evaluation Project and the Population Communication Services Project*. Carolina Population Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Available at www.cpc.unc.edu/measure/publications/workshops.

Kincaid, D. L. (2002). Drama, emotion, and cultural convergence. *Communication Theory, 12*, 136-152.

Sood, S. (2002). Audience involvement and entertainment-education. *Communication Theory, 12*, 153-172.

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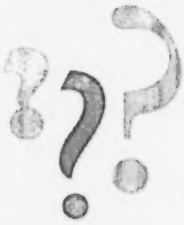

What do evaluators of public communication campaigns need to do to advance their work and this field?

Gary T. Henry is a professor in the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies and the Department of Political Science at Georgia State University. He serves as co-editor-in-chief of the journal, New Directions for Evaluation, *and recently co-authored* Evaluation: An Integrated Framework for Understanding, Guiding, and Improving Policies and Programs *(2000, Jossey-Bass).*

We are just beginning to learn how to grapple with the evaluation of public communication campaigns. Evaluators have been largely focused on evaluating direct services, and campaigns' use of information-related instruments to change attitudes and behaviors are relatively foreign to the evaluation community. Evaluating public information campaigns is replete with challenges that will require new developments.

First, we should be looking at the literature in the fields of public opinion, marketing, psychology, and public health. Evaluators have an empirical base that we can tap and researchers for these domains have already uncovered a lot about social marketing and behavior change campaigns. We ought to use that research base to learn about conceptualizing and measuring campaign outcomes and how these outcomes interrelate.

Second, almost every campaign seems to be based on the assumption that if we can just get people educated about an issue that they will care more about it. We need to challenge that belief. Existing research indicates that our interests and emotions lead our thinking and we are prone to learn more about things we are interested in. Thus far, people have relied too much on awareness as an outcome and not considered salience or the extent to which the target audience members are personally concerned with an issue.

These concepts and pathways are complex and it's a real challenge to get people to be specific. Terms like knowledge and awareness get tossed around, and they are viewed as having a causal relationship with attitude change. We need to unpack the interim outcomes that lead to the ultimate outcomes, such as policy change or behavioral change.

Third, we need to get better at evaluating the grassroots level work that often accompanies communication campaigns. An often-used notion with campaigns is combining "air" and "ground" strategies. The air strategy is the public media campaign and the ground strategy is grassroots organizing. It is really important to do more quantitative and qualitative work to develop outcomes and pathways at the grassroots level. It is very important not just to measure the uptake of the messages by the public, but whether or not the grassroots activities are really enhanced by having the media campaign.

Fourth, our tools and methodology in this arena are vastly deficient. For example, I worked on the evaluation of the Voluntary Ozone Action Program, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources campaign to improve Atlanta's air quality by reducing behaviors that contribute to ground-level ozone. We faced some methodological challenges and couldn't find techniques that would reliably estimate reductions in driving on alert days.

We ended up testing, to good effect, the use of rolling sample surveys, which use daily surveys to obtain measures of target outcomes—attitudes and behaviors—from an independent sample of individuals surveyed each day. This method tracks the day-to-day shifts in public opinion and behavior and enables evaluators to create natural experiments based on when campaign events or media coverage will take place (the treatment occurs on the days when campaign events take place; comparisons are on days when no campaign events occur).

Finally, I think we need to work more on how to evaluate the public policy change that many campaigns pursue. Usually before a policy is adopted you will see, for example, press releases from key leaders and legislative hearings. We have to be open to doing content analysis of those releases and testimony at the hearings to see the extent to which they were influenced by the campaign. We need to develop our techniques for tracing impacts and test them. We shouldn't simply ask, "Were we in the newspaper?"

We should not be daunted by the methodological challenges of evaluating campaigns. We have to push ahead; we have to try some new things. We have to put data collection strategies into the field even if they are imperfect, try them, and work on their development. We need evaluators who are going to be in this for the long haul because we need to learn from our failures and improve; we need to share our experiences and move forward together.

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Related Resources

Henry, G. T., & Gordon, C. S. (2001). Tracking issue attention: Specifying the dynamics of the public agenda. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 65,* 157-177.

Henry, G. T., & Gordon, C. S. (in press). Driving less for better air: Impacts of a public information campaign. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management.*

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How can evaluations of public communication campaigns be of more use to social change efforts?

Dr. Sharyn Sutton, President, and Elizabeth Heid Thompson, Vice President, of the social marketing firm, Sutton Group, in Washington D.C. have worked on the research, strategic planning, and execution of numerous social change efforts and public service campaigns.

We've seen a lot of money go to evaluating communication efforts that are not helpful to the program implementers or their funders. Like all social change efforts, public communication campaigns are complex initiatives that operate in a noisy setting. Yet many evaluations try to apply a strict causal paradigm to detect cause and effect relationships. Although trying to understand this relationship is admirable, the very nature of public communication campaigns often makes doing so impossible.

Evaluating for-profit advertising campaigns is easier because firms running the campaign have much more control over the intervention. They develop the message and advertisements, are able to direct the campaign to reach the target audience, and can control the level of media saturation. Designing an evaluation of this controlled approach is relatively straightforward.

By contrast, public communication campaigns frequently do not have this luxury of control. They cannot afford paid media or buy enough of it to reach saturation. As a result, public campaigns rely on public service announcements that may or may not reach their target audience, attempt to get earned media, or recruit partners who may distort or weaken the message. In other words, they lose control. In addition, advertising is just one aspect of public communication campaigns. These campaigns tend to be embedded in broader social change efforts that employ a range of intervention tactics, including public relations and policy advocacy.

Given the multifaceted and dynamic nature of these campaigns, trying to apply a strict causal evaluation to them becomes a very difficult, if not impossible, task. Although a laudatory goal, we have seen many evaluations fall short because of the emphasis on determining specific causal relationships by relying on experimental or quasi-experimental designs.

These evaluations tend to set up artificial controls, lack flexibility to change with the evolving campaign, and cannot separate the effects of a specific initiative versus other activities aimed at the same goals.

The paradox is that these evaluations attempt to attribute causality in an environment that does not provide them with sufficient information to make causal claims. Perhaps more importantly, they don't tell us why a campaign did or did not work, which limits our ability to learn and influence future efforts.

Evaluations need to better reflect the real life settings in which public communication campaigns operate. It's time for a shift away from a causal evaluation paradigm to a social change one. Social change evaluations more closely track and assess a campaign's activities and interim results and link them to its ultimate goals. They not only look at what happened before and after the campaign, but also assess interim tactical progress so that it can feed data back into the program to improve its chance of success.

For example, not only should an evaluation track changes in attitudes and awareness at the end of a campaign, it should also monitor whether the target audience is exposed to the message and heard it. Measuring only awareness and/or behavior change doesn't let you know if a campaign failed because of a poor message, lack of message saturation, or some other cause, such as poor implementation. By linking the interim results to a campaign's longer-term goals, the evaluation can help campaign directors pinpoint areas that need to be improved as well as make informed judgments about its success.

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Website: www.suttonsocialmarketing.com

Related Resources

Resources are available at www.suttonsocialmarketing.com.

Austin, E. (2001, January). Profile: Sharyn Sutton, Ph.D. *Advances* [The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's quarterly newsletter], *1*, 4.

Balch, G. I., & Sutton, S. M. (1997). Keep me posted: A plea for practical evaluation. In M. E. Goldberg, M. Fishbein & S. E. Middlestadt (Eds.), *Social marketing: Theoretical and practical perspectives* (pp. 61-74). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Sutton, S. M., Balch, G. I., & Lefebvre R. C. (1995). Strategic questions for consumer-based health communications. *Public Health Reports, 110*, 725–733.

Sutton, S. M., & Thompson, E. (2001). An in-depth interview study of health care policy professionals and their information needs. *Social Marketing Quarterly, 7*(4), 16-26.

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Behavioral Change Theory

continued from page 2

Outreach Initiative and the Success in School Equals Success in Life campaign (see Related Resources).[12]

Intention/Self-Standards

- Children benefit from seeing their parents at school. Your presence shows you care about them and about what happens at school.

Environmental Constraints/Skills

- It's not necessarily the quantity of time you spend with your child, but the quality.
- Ask that report cards and other school documents be made available in both English and Spanish.
- Ask the school to provide a translator for meetings and whether English as a second language (ESL) classes are available.[13]

Attitudes

- Children learn in different ways. Know how your child learns and tell your child's teacher about it. Tell the staff about your child's personality.
- Your child's teacher can give you insight into your child's learning style and his/her personality away from home.
- Share stories and photos about school in your home country. It is important for new teachers to see that differences between the schools go beyond language.

Social Norms

- There are many organizations that help bring parents and other members of the community together to work for better public education.
- If you already belong to a group of parents, invite other parents to join you.
- Churches and community centers are good locations to meet and talk with other parents about your child's school and education.

Emotion

- Allow your children to see you read daily newspapers, books, etc. Read stories aloud and tell them about your culture and heritage.

Self-efficacy

- You can get information on school-provided and related services anytime.
- Your child's teacher should contact you to tell you about positive and negative events that involve your child.
- The principal should contact all parents about larger issues at school that don't involve your child directly, but do affect him/her.

[12] Messages are drawn from materials available on the campaigns' websites: from the Hispanic Outreach Initiative – *Ten ways to participate in your children's education* (www.pta.org/parentinvolvement/spanish/nidotsen.pdf) and from Success in School Equals Success in Life – *Parents at Home* (www.schoolsuccessinfo.org/athome/index.html) and *Parents at School* (www.schoolsuccessinfo.org/atschool/index.html).

[13] The caution here is that at times idiomatic differences among translators can actually contribute to parental-school disconnect.

Related Resources

The National PTA's **Hispanic Outreach Initiative** seeks to remove language and cultural barriers that keep Hispanic families from actively participating in their child's education. The initiative offers a variety of language- and culture-sensitive materials, a mentoring program, and bilingual resources. National PTA also offers Spanish-language resources in the Parent Involvement section of its website: **www.pta.org/parentinvolvement/spanish/index.asp**.

The **Success in School Equals Success in Life** campaign promotes the involvement of minority parents in their children's education. It is a collaborative effort of the People For the American Way Foundation, NAACP, the Advertising Council, and the Eastman Kodak Company. Spanish-language resources are available at: **www.schoolsuccessinfo.org**.

Track Relevant Factors Through Evaluation

Theory and research can guide evaluation in the same way they guide message development. The behavioral factors the campaign focuses on, or that research reveals are the critical influencers for a given behavior, are those factors that are critical to track, in addition to the actual behavior.

Most social programs or interventions are ultimately about trying to affect human behavior, whether that behavior is getting involved effectively in your children's education, reading to your children, recycling products, or quitting smoking. Behavioral change theory can help guide the development and evaluation of these efforts by identifying the social, psychological, cultural, and physical factors that affect behavior among different populations.

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The authors wish to thank Xae Alicia Reyes, Associate Professor of Puerto Rican and Latino Studies and of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Connecticut-Storrs, and Maria E. Stallions, Assistant Professor of Education at Barry University in Miami, for their review of this article.

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In this section HFRP offers "new and noteworthy" resources on the evaluation of both public communication campaigns and strategic communications in general.

The **FrameWorks Institute** has two new CD-ROM presentations on effective communication strategies for social issues. ***Talking Children's Issues*** aims to provide communicators with a deeper understanding of the power of framing and its implications for their work. ***Making Communications Connections: A Review of Communications Campaigns*** assesses what makes a successful campaign, including such considerations as strategic planning and message development and framing. These narrated presentations use checklists, pictures, videos, and issue/campaign examples. For more information about these presentations, contact **Debbie Morgan** at the FrameWorks Institute by phone at **202-756-1378** or email at **dmorgan@frameworksinstitute.org**.

Goodman, A. (2002). ***Why bad ads happen to good causes: And how to ensure they won't happen to yours.*** Santa Monica, CA: Cause Communications. This guide for creating more effective public interest advertising is based on the results of a Roper ASW study of public interest advertising. The sample covered a 10-year period (1990–2000) and included ads by dozens of national nonprofits in large circulation publications. **www.rwjf.org/publications/publicationsPdfs/badadslo.pdf** (Acrobat file)

Kunkel, D., Smith, S., Suding, P., & Biely, E. (2002). ***Coverage in context: How thoroughly the news media report five key children's issues.*** College Park, MD: Casey Journalism Center on Children and Families. This report examines the depth of media coverage on child abuse and neglect, child care, child health insurance, teen childbearing, and youth crime and violence in 12 daily newspapers and four national television networks over a three-month period in 2001. **casey.umd.edu**

McManus, J., & Dorfman, L. (2002, January). ***Silent revolution: How U.S. newspapers portray child care.*** Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Media Studies Group. This report examines how care for preschool children was reported in a national sample of 11 newspapers over a two-year period (1999–2000). **www.bmsg.org/pdf/Issue11_0102.pdf** (Acrobat file)

Robinson, A., & Stark, D. (2002). ***Advocates in action: Making a difference for young children.*** Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children. This is a practical guide for advocates working to influence policy and practice on issues that affect young children. It includes chapters on non-legislative policy opportunities and using the media effectively. **www.naeyc.org/resources/catalog/new-books.asp**

U.S. General Accounting Office. (2002). ***Program evaluation: Strategies for assessing how information dissemination contributes to agency goals.*** Washington, DC: Author. (GAO-02-923) This report analyzes five federal agencies' strategies for assessing the effectiveness of media campaigns and other information dissemination programs designed to persuade others to behave in ways that produce desired social or environmental benefits. **www.gao.gov**

Valente, T. (2002). ***Evaluating health promotion programs.*** Oxford, England: Oxford University Press. This is a comprehensive resource for evaluators of health communication programs. Topics covered include health promotion frameworks and theories, study design, sampling techniques, methods, data management, and statistical analysis. **www.oup.co.uk/isbn/0-19-514176-8**

New Resources From HFRP

Coffman, J. (2002). ***Public communication campaign evaluation: An environmental scan of challenges, criticisms, practice, and opportunities.*** This report, commissioned by the Communications Consortium Media Center, presents the results of an environmental scan of what has been happening in the field of public communication campaign evaluation in recent years and what choices evaluators have been making in terms of their evaluation designs and methods. Drawing on pertinent research and evaluation studies, literature, and expert evaluator and practitioner opinions, it examines evaluation challenges, criticisms, and practice. Included are sections on relevant theory, outcomes, and methods useful for designing evaluations. The report ends with opportunities in communications evaluation for the road ahead. **www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/pubs/pubslist.html#pcce**

The FINE (Family Involvement Network of Educators) website features a new **FINE Research Digest** that offers condensed versions of research papers about family involvement and their implications for teacher education and professional development. The digest includes evaluation summaries of an early childhood program and an after school literacy program. **www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/fine/resources/digest/index.html**

Initiatives & Campaigns

Members of the **Grantmakers Income Security Taskforce** (GIST) have been sponsoring an initiative that links strategic communications experts with state and local advocates, researchers, and policy analysts working to inform TANF Reauthorization. Connect for Kids, a project of the Benton Foundation, coordinates the project. **www.gist-group.org**

The Trust for Early Education (TEE) and the **National Institute for Early Education Research** were created to build support for universal voluntary access to effective early education programs as part of the Pew Charitable Trusts' new initiative, Starting Early, Starting Strong: Investing in Early Education. TEE, a Washington, D.C. based advocacy center, informs the federal debate on early education and supports the work of state-level organizations. The National Institute for Early Education Research, a research center at Rutgers University, collects and disseminates research and information on early education federal and state policies. **nieer.org**

Focus Five for Kids, a Pennsylvania coalition of leading child advocates, began a major media campaign in September 2002 to promote five kid-focused policy priorities during the state's gubernatorial election. Television and newspaper ads throughout the state focused on the group's five priority areas: quality public education, school readiness, health care, after school and youth development activities, and parenting programs. **www.focusfive.org**

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Blogging (BLOG'ing)

Julia Coffman of Harvard Family Research Project wants to save you from the embarrassment of making the same mistake she made.

Recently over lunch, a colleague asked, "So, how do you feel about blogging?"

"Well," I responded, "I rather liked *Riverdance*. That Michael Flatley is one talented dancer."

To which he responded while snickering, "No, not clogging ... *blogging!*"

For those of you as clueless as I was about this term, let me explain. Blogging is short for Web logging. A *weblog* is an online journal or diary with short and frequent entries arranged in chronological order. Every day or week, for example, a weblog author (aka blogger) writes a new entry and posts it to his or her website. A weblog typically focuses on a single subject or theme, ranging from the personal to topic-specific or professional commentary. For example, weblogs exist on such subjects as health care, inequality, the media, social sciences, and, of course, politics.

Web logging is different from emails or websites that only offer lists of new resources or website links. A weblog might offer such links, but they are typically accompanied by the author's commentary. You read the log aware of that, and based on how much you trust, respect, and tend to agree or disagree with the author, you make your own judgments about the already filtered content.

Like most technology, Web logging is susceptible to annoyances. (Consider one weblog I came across devoted to "smells that annoy me.") But it is also a concept and technology with some potential merits. Let's start with the obvious. If you are already an opinion leader in your field, or are striving to be one, it can be an efficient tool for getting your messages (and your name) out, providing you have the time to devote to it.

If you are an advocate or communicator, Web logging can be a way to take advantage of message framing and repetition. We know that how information is framed makes a big difference in how it is perceived. We also know that the more a message is repeated, the more likely it is to have an impact. Web logging allows you to do both—inexpensively.

If you are an evaluator, under the right circumstances and at an appropriate level of frequency, Web logging can be a way to provide continuous feedback on what you are finding, offered in digestible bites (potentially for different audiences) that will likely elicit more consideration and reflection than your 200-page final report. Plus, it forces you to frame and interpret data, something which most of our stakeholders hire and trust us to do, but many evaluators are reluctant to undertake.

As is the case with all technology, Web logging is not for everyone or for all circumstances. At the very best, it's a tool that can make you more effective in your communications. At the very least, next time somebody asks you about blogging, Michael Flatley won't be the first image that pops into your head.

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A simple Web search for "blogging" will return many sites that offer information and/or tools to help you become a blogger. The author invites readers to email her links to quality weblogs on topics related to evaluation, children, or families.

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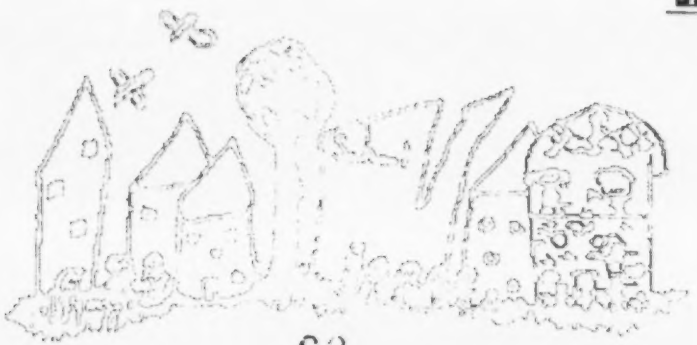

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